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Contents

Nease Library
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CONTRIBUTORS 517

COMMENTS 521

William Phillips and Edith Kurzweil

ARTICLES

Saul Bellow	*Ralph Ellison in Tivoli*	**524**
Norman Manea	*The Fifth Impossibility*	**529**
	The Jewish Writer	**532**
Alex Belly Bjelogrlić	*Kafka's Poor Chirihau*	**536**
George Konrád	*Aphorisms*	**544**
Louis A. Sass	*Wittgenstein on Freud*	**590**
Heidi Urbahn de Jauregui	*The Freedom of Heine*	**615**
Karen Wilkin	*A Critic and His Critics*	**627**
Millicent Bell	*Fiction Chronicle*	**635**

POETRY 600

Czeslaw Milosz
tr. Milosz and Robert Hass
Suzanne Paola
Glyn Maxwell
Eugenio Montale
tr. Millicent Bell
Göran Sonnevi
tr. Rika Lesser
Lynne McMahon
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FICTION

Aleksandar Tišma	*from* The Book of Blam	**558**
Andrey Platonov	*Chevengur*	**567**
	The Seventh Man	**571**
Corinna	*Memorial Day*	**580**

BOOKS

Denis Donoghue	*The Collected Writings of T. E. Hulme* by Karen Csengeri	**648**
Sanford Pinsker	*Redeeming Laughter* by Peter L. Berger	**652**
Sam Tanenhaus	*Conspiracy* by Daniel Pipes	**658**
Stephen Koch	*Man Without a Face* by Markus Wolf	**664**
David Rodman	*Fabricating Israeli History* by Efraim Karsh	**669**
John Burt	*Kyrie* by Ellen Bryant Voigt *The Post Office Murals Restored* by Robert B. Shaw *Selva Morale* by John Peck	**673**

Index to Volume LXV **680**

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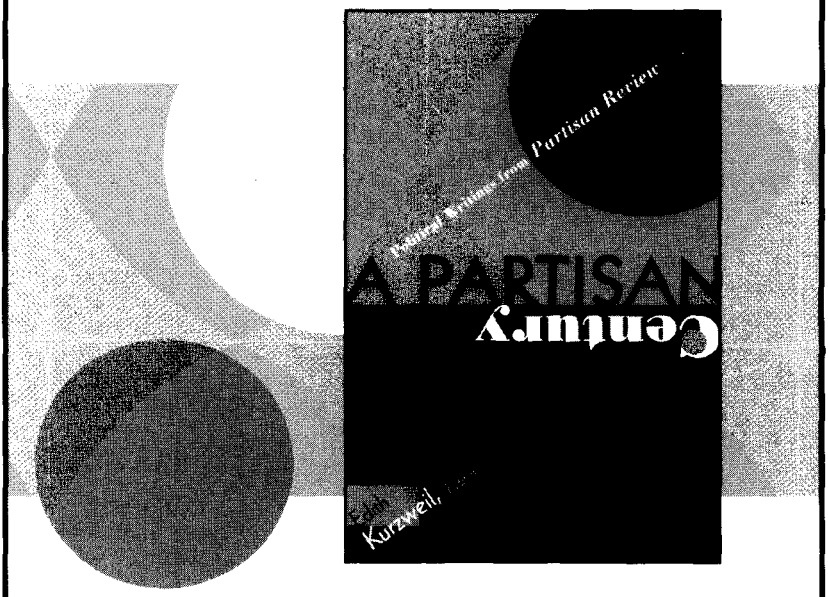

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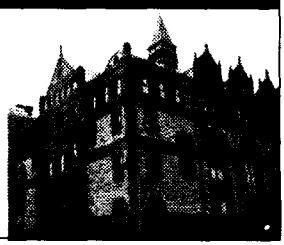

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COMMENTS

Clement Greenberg Though Clement Greenberg was for a time my closest friend, I have little to add to Karen Wilkin's brilliant and exhaustive review of the biography by Florence Rubenfeld [*New Criterion*, June 1998]. I might emphasize simply that I did not observe any inordinate power drive in Clem. He just expressed his ideas and opinions, and whatever insistence there was was that of leading critics in the past. But it should be remembered that he had to present his views against the strong resistance to the new painting and sculpture that Greenberg praised. As a matter of fact, to get his art pieces printed in *Partisan Review*, I had to struggle against the backward attitudes in the field of art by Rahv and the factional disagreements by George L. K. Morris and James Johnson Sweeney.

I also did not notice any special hankering by Clem after hard drugs; all that I saw was that he liked to take pills, and often he asked for pills that I myself was taking. As for his drinking, he indulged no more than any of us. We all drink too much.

The biography as a whole is unbalanced in that it stresses a power drive and his personal peculiarities, instead of giving a full-bodied account of his theories and approaches to painting and sculpture.

Art and the Bourgeoisie Peter Gay's attempt to rescue the bourgeoisie from the attacks on it by so many artists and thinkers is all to the good; in fact, the history of Western art and thought is largely made up of assaults on the crudeness of the bourgeoisie.

Peter Gay points out that without the financial support of the bourgeoisie, Western art and thought could not have thrived. But I think some addition here is necessary, for it was not the business culture that produced the artists, writers, and philosophers in the West, but that part of the bourgeoisie that made up the intelligentsia.

It should also be noted, though Peter Gay does not deny it, that the bourgeoisie fostered a good deal of philistinism.

Of course, the situation today is vastly different, for what is sponsored by the middle class and by the culture as a whole is a kind of trendy notion of the *avant-garde*, a notion that supports all kinds of *reductio ad absurdems* of genuine advanced art.

Sex and Morality Norman Podhoretz has written an excellent account and analysis of the whole affair involving President Clinton's escapades [*Commentary*, June 1998]. His observation of the split in the culture between the traditional values of much of the population and the trendy tendencies of the presumably advanced part is especially acute.

I have only one point to add. It seems to me quite arguable that sex is a private matter, and has very little to do with morality, except when its

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abuse hurts other people. This would explain at least in part the mixed attitudes toward Clinton's escapades exhibited in most popular polls. For much of the population still believes in traditional morality, but is open to the easy attitudes toward sex of the new liberation movements. It would also tend to stress that the criteria used to judge the President's behavior should concern matters of taste rather than those of morality.

But, on the whole, Podhoretz's piece gives a clear picture of the whole story of Clinton's extracurricular activities and of the investigation of the matter by the independent counsel—even before the President's testimony to Kenneth Starr.

WP

Terrorism The appalling attack on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania reminded me of what now has been called the first of such incidents, the attempt on the Pope's life on May 13, 1981, which I reported on in *Partisan Review*. The Italian press (ranging from the far right to the far left) then noted that the presence of the would-be assassin, Mehemet Ali Agca, "was not an Italian creation but that his presence was not fortuitous," and probably was facilitated by the recent construction of an Islamic center at the University of Perugia with funds from "international organizations which aim to subvert civil life, to fuel and extend conflicts between people and nations, to generate fear and violence and thus obstruct open discourse and the democratic process." Agca had gone there before shooting the Pope. The press then noted as well that the Lybian government and the PLO had provided bombs, machine guns, and other munitions free of charge to terrorist groups, and that it was not yet clear which interests Agca was serving.

Seventeen years later, we are forced to deal with terrorism on a global scale. In 1981, the Italians argued that democracy had become too successful, and thus was open to anarchy, fascism, and foreign influences; and that openness allows for the excesses of self-expression, for manipulations leading to perennial scandals, and, ultimately, for the presence of terrorists like Agca. That is absolutely true—whether they are trained in the former Czechoslovakia, the U.S.S.R., Lybia, or in Afghanistan and Iraq. In America, terrorists have an even easier time. Here alone, neither citizens nor foreigners are registered after getting across our frontiers. And when caught they must be considered innocent until proven guilty. Thus the belief in *jihad* by extremist Muslim ideologues who are willing to die, who if caught may be gotten off on legal technicalities, poses an unprecedented danger not only to our embassies (which with enough funds could be sufficiently fortified) but to every place within the country.

We're in a catch-22. We must preserve democracy and religious freedom and yet we have to protect ourselves. The only way to do so, I believe,

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is to give our secret services more rather than less power, to allow them the necessary secrecy to investigate—without assuming that secrecy inevitably is undemocratic. The best way to proceed is to do what other countries have done, to recruit the best and brightest of our young, and to make sure to test their ethics and characters thoroughly before giving them free reign as agents.

EK

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SAUL BELLOW

Ralph Ellison in Tivoli

Some forty years ago I came into a small legacy and with it I bought a house in Tivoli, New York. "House" is not the word for it; it was, or once had been, a Hudson River mansion. It had a Dutch cellar kitchen of flagstones and a kitchen fireplace. There was a dumb-waiter to the vanished dining room above. The first floor had a ballroom but according to my informants, Tivoli's townspeople, no one had danced in it for eighty years. Tivoli had been the birthplace of Eleanor Roosevelt. The villagers were the descendants of the servants and grounds-keepers of the Dutchess County aristocrats.

I shan't be going into the social history of the township or the county. There were great names in the vicinity—the Livingstones, the Chapmans and the Roosevelts, but I didn't know much about them. I had sunk my $16,000 legacy into a decaying mansion. To repair the roof and to put in new plumbing I drew an advance of $10,000 from the Viking Press to write a novel called *Henderson the Rain King.*

There was a furnace of sorts and a warm-air system that took the moisture out of your nostrils. I was too busy with *Henderson* and with my then wife to take full notice of my surroundings. The times were revolutionary—I refer to the sexual revolution. Marriages were lamentably unstable and un-serious. My wife, tired of life with me in the gloomy house, packed her bags and moved to Brooklyn.

I was naturally wretched about this. I now found the solitude (and the decay of the house) insupportable. Determined to save my $16,000, I threw myself into the work of salvage. I painted the kitchen walls and the bedrooms, as much for therapeutic reasons as to improve the property.

Then Ralph Ellison, who was teaching at Bard College, accepted my invitation to move in. I have always believed that this was an act of charity on his part.

We had known each other in Manhattan. I had reviewed *Invisible Man* for *Commentary.* I was aware that it was an extremely important novel and that, in what he did, Ralph had no rivals. What he did no one else could do—a glorious piece of good fortune for a writer.

Both of us at one time had lived on Riverside Drive. We met often and walked together in the park, along the Hudson. There we discussed all kinds of questions and exchanged personal histories. I was greatly taken

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with Ellison, struck by the strength and independence of his mind. We discussed Richard Wright, Faulker and Hemingway. Ralph, it was clear, had thought things through for himself, and his ideas had little in common with the views of the critics in the literary quarterlies. Neither he nor I could accept the categories prepared for us by literary journalists. He was an American writer who was black. I was a Jew and an American and a writer, and I believed that by being described as a "Jewish writer" I was being shunted to a siding. This taxonomy business I saw as an exclusionary device. Ellison had similar objections to classification. From his side, he saw the Negro as one of the creators of America's history and culture.

That was okay with me. We found each other sympathetic. We got along splendidly and went fishing together for striped bass in Long Island Sound.

Ralph drove into Tivoli in his huge old Chrysler. He himself serviced it, coddled it, tuned it, and it ran as smoothly as it had when it came off the assembly line. The trunk, when it was opened, gave me my first hint of Ralph's powers of organization. For hunting there were guns, there were decoy ducks, for fishing, rods, lures and a wicker-work creel; there were tools of every description. Ralph was able to repair radios and hi-fi equipment. I envied him his esoteric technical skills. Where I saw a frightening jumble of tubes, dials, condensers (I can't even name the parts), he saw order. In my trunk I carried the spare wheel, the jack, a few rusty tire irons, rags and brown paper bags from the market. His trunk with its tools and weapons announced that he was prepared for any emergency, could meet every challenge to his autonomy.

He did not come alone. He was accompanied by a young black Labrador retriever who jumped from the Chrysler, eager to play, pawing my chest. Ralph had bought the dog from John Cheever, who was then, briefly, a breeder of black Labs.

The ballroom now became Ralph's studio. It ran the entire length of the house. He set up his typewriter and his desk and we found a book case for his manuscripts. You couldn't see the Hudson from the ground floor. Instead you had the Catskills to look at.

In the ballroom Ralph kept African violets which he watered with a turkey baster. It was from him that I learned all that I know about house plants.

But the important thing was that the gloomy house was no longer empty—no longer gloomy. All day long I heard the humming of his electric typewriter. Its long rhythms made me feel that we were on a cruise ship moving through the woods—the pines and the locust trees, the huge hay fields plowed, planted and harvested by Chanler Chapman. Chanler, before I could be aware of it, became Henderson the Rain King. He drove

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his tractor like a real king, knocking over fences, breaking stone walls and pulling up boundary-markers.

Ralph and I brought the house under civilized control.

He came down to get his breakfast in a striped heavy Moroccan garment. He wore slippers with a large oriental curve at the toe. He was a very handsome man. A noteworthy person, solid, symmetrical and dignified but with a taste for finery. Ralph was never anything but well-dressed, and he liked clothes of an Ivy League cut. In the days before everybody had elected to go bareheaded, he wore what used to be called a porkpie hat of very fine felt. By comparison, I was a stumble bum. He put on his carefully chosen clothes with aesthetic intent. I often amused him by my (comparative) slovenliness. He studied me, silently amused—deeply amused by my lack of consideration for my appearance. Day in day out I wore the same blue jeans and chambray shirt.

Our meals were simple. We ate in the kitchen. I learned from Ralph how to brew drip-coffee properly. He had been taught by a chemist to do it with ordinary laboratory paper filters and water at room temperature. The coffee then was heated in a *bain-marie*—a pot within a pot. Never allowed to boil.

We saw little of each other during the day. I kept a vegetable garden and at the kitchen door I planted herbs.

At cocktail time we met again in the kitchen. Ralph mixed very strong martinis, but nobody got drunk. We talked a great deal, before dinner, before the martinis took hold. Over dinner, Ralph told me the story of his life—told me about his mother, about Oklahoma City; about their years in Gary, Indiana, and later in Cleveland, where he and his brother hunted birds for the table during the Great Depression. He described to me his trip, in freight trains, to Tuskegee; and how he learned to play the trumpet; and how he had come upon certain essays by André Malraux that changed his life. Often we rambled together about Malraux, about Marxism, or painting or novel writing.

There were long discussions of American history and of nineteenth-century politics, of slavery and the Civil War and Reconstruction. Ralph was much better at history than I could ever be, but it gradually became apparent that he was not merely talking about history but telling the story of his life, and tying it into American history. His motive was in part literary—he was trying to find the perspective for an autobiography. In this respect he much resembled Robert Frost, who had made a routine, an entertainment of the principal events of his life and polished or revised them again and again when he had the right listeners. But Frost was his own hagiographer. He would tell you how Ezra Pound had received him in his London flat sitting in a hip-bath and treated him—Frost—like a

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ploughboy-poet. "I was no Bobby Burns," Frost often said. He was trying to establish *his* version or picture of a significant chapter of literary history and to spray it with a fixative of his own.

Ralph's purpose was very different from Frost's. He took pleasure in returning again and again to the story of his development not in order to revise or to gild it but to recover old feelings and also to consider and reconsider how he might find a way to write his story.

He and I had our differences. I am not inclined to be sentimental about those Arcadian or Utopian days. He didn't approve of my way of running the place. I had complained also that his dog relieved himself in my herb garden. I asked, "Can't you arrange to have him do his shitting elsewhere?"

This offended Ralph greatly, and he was outraged when in a fit of nastiness I took a swipe at the dog with a broom for fouling the terrace. He complained to John Cheever that, with my upbringing, I was incapable of understanding, I had no feeling for pedigrees and breeds and that I knew only mongrels and had treated his *chien de race* like a mongrel.

Cheever was broken up by this. Well, it was very funny. Cheever never spoke of it to me. I learned of Ralph's complaint when Cheever's diary was posthumously published.

When I told Ralph that perhaps it would be a good idea to thin out the locust trees along the driveway he said, "Well, they're your trees."

Immediately I telephoned a woodsman with a power-saw. I don't recall that there was such a saw in the trunk of the Chrysler. But in my place Ralph would have cut the trees himself. Nor would he have consulted anyone about it.

But the main cause of trouble between us was the dog. Ralph believed that I had taken against the dog.

I have begun in old age to understand just how oddly we all are put together. We are so proud of our autonomy that we seldom if ever realize how generous we are to ourselves, and just how stingy with others. One of the booby traps of freedom—which is bordered on all sides by isolation—is that we think so well of ourselves. I now see that I have helped myself to the best cuts at life's banquet.

But our boiling paranoias do simmer down, and later on Ralph and I resolved our differences. His dog was after all handsome, intelligent, lively. I didn't hold it against him that he was a thoroughbred, a *chien de race*. We made peace and parted on the best of terms.

Ralph and I later agreed that our Tivoli life had been extraordinarily pleasant. It's no longer a shored-up ruin. Its new proprietor has turned it into a showplace. But Ralph and I, two literary squatters, comically spiky, apart though living together, had been very lucky in the two years we spent together in what I called the House of Usher. We did not form a great

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friendship. What we had was a warm attachment. He respected me. I admired him. He had a great deal to teach me; I did my best to learn.

Since that time I have brewed my morning coffee precisely as he had taught me to brew it.

I often summon him up. He is wearing his Moorish dressing gown and the leather slippers with turned-up toes. Sometimes while pouring water from the measuring cup with one hand he rubs his nose with the other, rubs it so hard that you can hear the cartilage crack.

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NORMAN MANEA

The Fifth Impossibility

Kafka did not often write about the country in which he was born. When he writes about the language—that is, the homeland—which he came to inhabit, he speaks about "impossibilities."

In a letter to Max Brod, he lists three impossibilities for a Jew writing in German or, in fact, in any other language—which means in any fatherland. He considers these impossibilities as a matter of "the Jewish question or of despair in relation to that question." Kafka saw himself as a product of the impossible, which he recreated continuously as poetry, that is, as life, with a magical and austere fixation.

Franz Kafka's three impossibilities are the impossibility of not writing, of writing in German, and of writing differently.

To these he adds a fourth, comprehensive impossibility: namely, "the impossibility of writing per se." Actually, the impossibility to live *per se*, the impossibility "to endure life"—as he confesses in a letter to Carl Bauer in 1913. "My whole being is directed toward literature. . .the moment I abandon it, I cease to live. Everything I am, and am not, is a result of this." Few people have had their homeland as dramatically located in writing as the Jewish Franz Kafka writing in Prague in German—his paradoxical way of "crossing over to the side of the world" in the struggle with himself. "I am nothing but literature and can and want to be nothing else," he often repeated.

It may seem surprising that Kafka did not mention a fifth impossibility, one which is the most Kafkaesque of all: the impossibility of exile or the impossibility of operetta, if we are to follow the Romanian exile Cioran who held that one would do better to write operettas than to write in a foreign language. And yet it would be more suggestive to call it "the snail's impossibility": that is, the impossibility of continuing to write in exile, even if the writer takes along his language as the snail does his house.

Such an extreme situation seems borrowed from the very premise of Kafka, and our clownish forerunner K. could not but be attracted by such a farcical hypothesis of self-destruction. For that guinea-pig of the

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Editorial Note: This reflection on Kafka was part of the PEN-American evening, "*Metamorphosis*: A New Kafka" at Town Hall, New York, March 26, 1998.

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impossible, expatriation was not just an extravagant variation of his estrangement. Expatriation had been sometimes an immediate, urgent, even demonic summons. "Filthy brood—is what I heard them call the Jews—" he tells us in one of his letters. "The heroism involved in staying put in spite of it all is the heroism of the cockroach," he adds. *The Metamorphosis* can be regarded, from this point of view, as one of the most powerful literary representations of the coming Holocaust.

Kafka did think of that fifth impossibility not only when he dreamt, in his last years, to settle in the Holy Land. "I'm here at the General Insurance Company and yet I hope to sit sometime, in some far-away countries, at a window of the office of sugar plantations or to look to Muslim cemeteries," he had once written. Salvation through self-destruction seemed always to him a greatly appealing burlesque. "What I call foolish is the idea that Tibet is far from Vienna." Such words are indeed his. "I'm reading a book about Tibet; at a description of a settlement near the Tibetan border in the mountains my heart grows suddenly heavy, this village seems so hopelessly deserted, so far from Vienna. Would it really be far?" Kafka asks Milena, asking himself too, and knowing too well that the desert is, in fact, not far away at all, but dangerously close to Vienna, to Prague, to the General Insurance Company where he works, to his family house, to the room and desk of his solitude.

Neither sugarcane plantations, nor Muslim cemeteries, nor the Great Wall of China of his famous story are far away. It is not necessary to imagine Kafka in the Middle-Eastern desert, or in Communist China, or in Brazil, where that thoroughly unKafkaesque Viennese Jew Stefan Zweig would commit suicide, in order to authenticate one of the most expressive twists of this century that is now counting its dizzying end.

Even imagining Kafka in the world capital of exiles, New York, the New York of his character Karl Rossman, or next door in Newark, "in a room in the house of an elderly Jewish lady on the shabby lower stretch of Avon Avenue," as Philip Roth suggested, would not add a lot to our knowledge about his or our predicament.

In his nocturnal room in Prague, the exile *par excellence* had already been in those and many other distant or nonexistent places.

And yet, like many of Kafka's premonitions, the snail's impossibility too, though not mentioned by him as such, would haunt the shadows of his unsettling, carnivalesque posterity.

Kafka's posterity extended the Jew's condition to many categories of exile, but it did not relieve the Jewish "impossibility."

Primo Levi saved himself in Auschwitz through the German language. After the Holocaust, Paul Celan wrote in the language of his mother's butchers. To the end, Mandelstam's motherland remained the Russian language, in which Stalin gave the order for his death.

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Joyce, Musil and Thomas Mann, Conrad and Nabokov, Gombrowicz and Bashevis Singer, Beckett and Ionesco, Brodsky and Cortazar have conferred a new legitimacy on the expatriate writer. They are no more than forerunners of the world of disjointed conjunctions in which we live.

It is hard to picture Kafka in our New World, and harder still to imagine him bearing the cap and bells of a telegenic promoter of his own works, as is commanded by the computerized entertainments business of the Planetary Circus. Yet the way in which the solitary Franz Kafka went beyond these "impossibilities" without leaving them behind, surviving not only in the German language of his estrangement, may remind our memoryless society of that hope without hope contained in this unrepeatable and impossible model.

We may wonder why and how Franz Kafka alone, the essential exile, and the word "Kafkaesque," essential for the language of estrangement and exile, became essential for our time. Some of us would probably like, childishly enough, to believe this a proof that writing, as secular prayer, may still accomodate parts of our daily life comedy.

Whatever the explanation may be, it remains a mystery or a joke that is still trying to find its place in the curiosity shop of so many motherlands and fatherlands.

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NORMAN MANEA

The Jewish Writer in the Public Arena

Having had the greatest part of my biography located in communist Eastern Europe—where real life was an underground life and public life was an arena for masquerade—I had many reasons to doubt the role of the writer as a public speaker.

Life taught us over there to distrust anything public; readers read our books between the lines and we accepted the distortion as the inevitable price to pay for our mutual inner exile.

As you well know, politics is about power, art about freedom; so, art in a totalitarian state comes to stand not only as a challenge—as it does for every authority—it comes to stand for nothing less than *the enemy*.

This was also true, and perhaps especially so, for the Jewish writer. I and my Jewish writer friends felt distant not only from the Party nomenclature—be it Jewish or not—but also from the Jewish community as an official institution. The game that institution played was not an admirable one. I was quite often offended and appalled by official statements of the Jewish community, in line with and serving Party propaganda. Even when we had to accept a kind of complicity with the Jewish community as the last possible enclave, we did it with a very odd feeling.

Everything was manipulated in the strategy of communist ideology. It is hard to scrutinize and truly understand yourself in the midst of so many perversions against which you try to pit yourself.

Throughout those years of misery and terror, it seemed that we were all suffering, that all of us were so "Jewish" that it would have been unseemly to emphasize the extra reserved for the alien. Besides, you cannot really assess your situation if it is impossible to criticize (even) your own community, if you are forbidden to express your conflicts with it, if you are living in that state of siege characteristic of totalitarian society.

Since 1989, when we stopped being all "Jewish" and began to redefine ourselves without the heavy lid of terror, the shocking rebirth of nationalism in some parts of Eastern Europe has deepened, of course, the disappointment of those of us who hoped for a rapid separation from the

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past. It is not accidental that in 1982, after I publicly protested against the nationalist policy of the communist authorities I was called by the official press "anti-Party," "cosmopolitan," "extra-territorial," as it is not accidental that ten years later, in 1992, after I published a text about the nationalism of the Romanian cultural elite, the press campaign in the new democratic and less democratic newspapers was even more extensive and more colorful, calling me "traitor," "the dwarf from Jerusalem," "a moth, hiding in distant exile."

"The loneliness of the poet—what is the loneliness of the poet?" was a question that a group of Jewish Romanian writers fond of aphorisms and wordplay amused themeselves with in the first postwar period.

"A circus routine that hasn't been anounced." That was the answer given then, half a century ago, by the young poet Paul Celan, before he went into exile in the West.

In the world-circus the poet looks like an Auguste the Fool ill-equipped for everyday life in which his fellow men offer and receive their share of edible reality. He seems a bizarre bungler who dreams of other rules, other evaluations and rewards. And yet he often demonstrates a deep knowledge of his fellow citizens, from whom he takes and to whom he returns a kind of magic that is as calculated as it is spontaneous. His weakness may be seen, therefore, as an unconventional and devious strength, his solitude as a deeper kind of solidarity, his imagination as a shortcut to reality.

Inevitably, in the bright public arena, Auguste the Fool faces, finally, the Clown of Power. All human tragicomedy may be seen, occasionally, in this encounter, in the history of Circus as History.

An artist who has lived under tyranny (and even one who hasn't) cannot ignore the barrier that separates the two roles.

We considered, over there, and still consider, even over here, that a name inscribed in a book is perhaps man's supreme attempt at *solidarity* with his fellow man, in defiance of mortality. We believed that the world of literature represents at the same time the miraculous conversion of *solitary* suffering and hopes. And yet, we also struggled to overcome the impasse between *solitude* and *solidarity*.

There are times when even the most solitary men of letters are obliged to overcome their scepticism, to accept the risk of rhetoric. Not only Émile Zola did it. There were in our century many extreme situations when writers rose above terror, broke with opportunistic local habits, set aside their innate distrust of rhetoric, and declared a clear opposition

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against oppression, against its dark means and manipulations—anti-semitism included.

I have always believed in a double, complementary integrity: that the writer should remain, in his work, faithful to the artistic criterion and, in his social life, in the public arena, he should keep his moral civic fortitude in confronting the traps of public life. This was never and nowhere easy. It wasn't easy, of course, in the communist byzantine East; it is not easy in the new age of Western capitalism.

There are, of course, huge differences between a closed society, distorted by terror, fear, and misery, and an open society, distorted by selfish competition and trivial publicity, between an artificial, hypocritical collectivism and a well-trained individualism. But it is sometimes amazing to discover the hidden similarities between a society obsessed with lies and a society obsessed with money. To contemplate the free man and the not always happy carnival of the free market after you have known the captive man in the dark carnival of tyranny, to think about the different forms demagogy, cynicism, and bigotry take in a closed and in a free society—this often proves to be a quite rewarding human experience.

After the defeat of fascism and the collapse of communism, the open society itself is also undergoing, it seems, a deep crisis, a loss of coherence, of decency, of generosity and grandeur. The need for an enemy (ethnic enemy, ideological enemy, gender enemy, religious enemy) drives and confuses people as well in today's global, capitalistic world.

Communitarian narcissism generates suspicion and cult worship; sectarian formations sometimes present staggering similarities to the authoritarian model. Yet blasphemy—so powerful a concept in the socialist canon and a driving force in demonizing difference in the socialist society—can operate only in restricted areas and more or less isolated groups in the free world.

At the macro level of an open and heterogeneous society, blasphemy cannot resonate except in the form of scandal—scandal that is instantly carnivalized through commercial promotion and reduced to a routine product.

As the power of blasphemy has grown more negligible, so the field of the carnival has become all the larger in the public arena. The television audience's Pantagruelian consumption—the omnipresent and omnipotent monster of trivialization—compresses the earthly Babel into a huge village fair. "Televised" reality becomes a self-devouring "proto-reality" without which the real world is not confirmed and therefore seems not to exist.

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The perception of outrageusness is being lost; we are now reaching a routine cohabitation with the outrageous. Nothing appears audible unless it is scandalous, but nothing is scandalous enough to become memorable.

More than ever, we desperately need, perhaps, a "transcendent ideal" in our centrifugal, materialistic, mobile world, from which the concept of the ideal often seems to have been banished. On the other hand, in the aftermath of totalitarian systems of all persuasions, a clear-sighted approach to the manipulations unleashed by every ideal is all the more essential.

So, in trying to understand the dangers facing democracy, it may be useful, perhaps, to look to the "life history" of the fight against totalitarianism, in what meant the power of the powerless Auguste the Fool confronting the immoral environment of his time and place, even when it implied taking risks.

As the century counts out its dizzying end, it seems in a hurry to clear the burden of its historical memory.

For the Eastern European writer who moved early or more recently to the West, the end of the century concentrates as in a funnel a bizarre mixture of life histories. The Holocaust, the communist dictatorship, exile—which also are, not at all by chance, Jewish tragedies—these sum up the key traumas and the far-from-neglible price that they entail.

Anyone who today examines that past called the twentieth century has a certain sense of weariness, not just with what was, but also with what is still to be after this exhausting "preliminary exercise" towards a radically new world, as it is announced by the new century and the new millenium already at our door. Also at our Jewish door, of course, with or without a *Mezuzah*.

Despite his marginal place in the public arena of our consumer world, the writer may still have something important to say even in his strange role as a speaker. Not as a prophet of the future—the last prophets died two thousand years ago and they were often wrong—but as an independent observer of a troubled past and as an independent participant in a troubled present. After all, at this end-beginning of the world, the fleeting and constant human anxiety, its uniqueness, its extraordinary creativity, its drama and its dreams, are here with us, around and beyond us, to be scrutinized in the century-long moment of each still-living day.

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ALEX BELLY BJELOGRLIĆ

Kafka's Poor Chirihau

Literature is filled with accounts of men being transformed into ravens, monsters, frogs, or pigs. This magical skill—lycanthropy—can be applied equally to the outer world or directed at undesirable neighbors. In the *Odyssey*, Circe malevolently banishes uninvited guests to a sty. Also, Merlin, the best known magician of medieval legends, entertained himself by transforming his protégé, the future King Arthur, alternately into a fish, a squirrel, and a sparrow. Transformation into an animal form typically means the loss of speech, but human conscience and reason are usually preserved.

Cases of voluntary magical self-transformations are no less frequent. In recent times Carlos Castaneda attracted attention to the Central American Indian "brujos" or wicked conjurers, who, when necessary, can choose an alternate model of reality and transform themselves into ravens, lynx, or desert dogs. Here, as in Circe's case, knowledge of the magical properties of herbs and chemical stimulants plays an important role.

Another kind of transformation may be accomplished posthumously—reincarnation, with all of the complexity attending this oriental religious teaching. The hierarchy of earthly incarnations on the way to perfection can be interpreted in a highly personal manner. For Strindberg, flowers represented perfect beings which exist in a permanent state of nirvana; they multiply without fighting and die without tears. "These are beings," he wrote, "that have achieved Buddha's dream to want nothing, bear everything and retire in themselves."

The idea of horticultural-directed transformation might not seem to be as exotic when compared to a misfortunate salesman who, through no fault of his own and without implementing *samsara,* wakes up one morning to find himself transformed into a huge beetle. Gregor Samsa loses his ability to speak and must express himself by hissing instead. His appearance disgusts his relatives and colleagues, but not those who confront him for the first time, like the lodgers who appear later in the story. Because of his transformation, human food becomes loathsome to Samsa, so, even though his appetite grows increasingly weak, he begins to feed on rotten vegetables and bones brought to him by his inventive sister. At the same time, he listens with increasing interest as his sister plays the violin, feeling that "a way to a yearned-for, strange food has appeared." Therefore, in order to appease his spiritual hunger, he had to be transformed into a beetle. Before

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his transformation, oppressed by hard work, the obligation to support his family and additionally burdened by the bankruptcy of his father's firm, the young salesman represents a kind of marionette who is manipulated by a menagerie of economic, social, and familial persecutions. After his conversion into an economically useless being, members of Gregor's family suddenly become capable of their own business undertakings. They grow optimistic about the future, even more so, as they attempt to forget his presence. Forsaken by everyone, the poor insect finally dies of exhaustion, but not before he lovingly bids farewell to his family. How is this motif of transformation—one of the predominant themes throughout Kafka's *oeuvre*—to be comprehended?

Mystery is often regarded as an inherent quality of this kind of fiction. It is spoken about allegorically, as a rational substance that cannot be discerned in the fiction of the absurd. A regular element of Kafka's stories is an indefinable power that opposes the main character, who entangles himself again and again in futile efforts to explain its causes and purposes. In a certain number of stories this power is presented as the burden of the lax parental authority. "A Letter to a Father," a well-known work, was particularly stimulating to the critics who tried to find the key to the author's fundamental literary obsession in the realm of Freudian categories. But, the usual psychoanalytical analysis, however filled with conviction, eventually appeared too obvious; it seemed to have spent its possibilities, arriving from the edge to tear off Kafka's enigmatic creation. This analysis touched on, and over-stressed, only one of the three motivational nuclei around which the narrative is spun. The theme of unusually complex family relations is probably the most vivid way to conjure a greater field of natural powers that act as frustrations. A more complete picture can only be gained by correlating this theme with the motifs of hunger and transformation, which are equally emphasized in Kafka's work. The story concerning the unusual case of the "Prague acquisitor" is significant chiefly because these three themes are closely connected in it.

One possible method of interpretation has been suggested in Elias Canetti's book about Kafka's correspondence with Felicia Bauer. Throughout his work, Kafka was actually practicing disappearance (transformation by changing his characters into various animals, thereby enabling them to escape the savage mechanisms of violence and power). In Canetti's view, a writer could find inspiration for that kind of behavior in the ancient Chinese tradition of transformation, rooted in oriental philosophy, which greatly interested Kafka, but this by no means closes the circle of questions. Canetti's idea is just one in a series of efforts to shed light on Samsa's problem from the standpoint of the writer's intention, his existential philosophy, the era's prevailing ideological circumstances, and from a medical point of view.

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It may be the case that Kafka's work is composed in such a way that it resists the discovery of any keys to fully understanding it, and that its meaning surpasses the most expansive frames of criticism. But, Bela Hamvas, a Hungarian philosopher and writer, wrote a stimulating text, *The Secret Record*, published in the late 1980s, which is valuable for understanding Kafka's literary preoccupations. By following the trail left by this significant author, who never received the acknowledgment he deserved during his lifetime, we shall see that Kafka's story is an important milestone in a long-standing tradition of works that have come out of European civilization since the dawn of the modern age. Let us examine several ideas presented in *The Secret Record*.

First, we face a reconsideration of the traditional Darwinian theory of evolution, which states that the interconnected, genealogical tree of beings evolved from monocellular organisms into mankind. Hamvas's dispute concentrates on the assertion that all species move forward and that some don't evolve at all. "There are those that move slowly, and those that move suddenly, even jump. There are species that stagnate, and species in retrograde movement." The wisdom of ancient peoples contained the knowledge that certain species actually represent the retrograde evolutionary stages of man. As a consequence of retrograde mutation, part of mankind might have separated from the rest and gone "backwards." Hamvas mentions that the ancient inhabitants of Iran regarded serpents and ants as human groups that had become separated. In that society, the ritual killing of ants was prescribed as a punishment for individuals who committed the sins against the community of becoming too fanatically devoted to gaining wealth and having no interest in free time and entertainment.

These people maintained that ants were part of a community of beings that had taken a different direction, one devoted to rough technology and pure material reproduction. Also, this community had lost its sense of love, art, and companionship. Finally, as a certain accumulation of features occurred, a mutation emerged that determined the future development of this species. The original being was degraded, darkened, and stooped. As a result of its mutation, it gained six legs, a feeler, and a proboscis and dropped into the form we know today.

The concept that streams of life are not determined by intelligence or will, but by imagination—at least, by the germ of spiritual strength in beings on other levels of the evolutionary scale—is basic to Hamvas's theory. For instance, a new form of life always appears first as an ideal, as a picture that exists in the subconscious of certain members of the community, to which members of that community are unknowingly being adapted. When the first seedling of this ideal appears, it slowly grows

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among the members of the given community. Throughout this "incubation" period certain superficial, censorious rules conceal the ideal. For a long time, Hamvas says, mankind publicly propagated Utopian ideas and altruisms, while an image that does no credit to the human race simmered in the depths.

Art, not philosophy or science, is the activity that manages to bridge the gap between the ideal and reality and attains transcendental powers. When art is generous, it is able to improve the image of a new life and a new being, into which man aspires to evolve. And when it is decadent, as according to Hamvas all modern art is, it will permanently justify this secret ideal, however loathsome it may be.

At the dawn of the modern age, in the work of artists such as Shöngauer, Bosch, and Brueghel, the ideal that remained hidden for a long time finally became apparent: censure yielded and furious monsters entered the historical scene. Later, Swift presaged them as well, when, in *Jahno,* he featured a pure two-legged mutant, an evil creature capable only of causing endless strife.

Modern art, the Hungarian writer suggests, is nothing more than the vindication of an image man set for himself in secrecy and guarded for centuries. This ideal is "Chirihau," a half insect, half vulture, which creates incessant strife and lives in unorganized flocks. It is endlessly gluttonous, given to pranks, brutal, and unsteady. "Chirihau obviously believes that the only thing that comprises a sane and reasonable life is what he does." "One has to gorge everything he can and hide from others what he cannot; any remaining strength is used for copulation and snoring." A serious danger is posed to humanity if the permanent accumulation of these characteristics causes a sudden mutation, which will forever determine the future direction of life on earth. Naturally, the temporal proportions Hamvas has in mind are such that the word "instantly" might not indicate a very short span of time.

However, this theory could be refuted by the fact that contemporary science has not yet been able to discover the fossilized remains of anything resembling a transitive form between man and ant, which would confirm ancient Persian beliefs. From a contemporary scientific point of view, a well-informed anthropologist would likely dismiss Hamvas's idea as that of a charlatan, even though anthropology itself represents a realm of endless speculation which is modified at certain intervals by new discoveries. In addition, scientific conclusions are often based upon a few scarce jaws and piles of teeth, more or less preserved and collected from various sites.

The latest discoveries indicate that we can trace a "common ancestor" to an even more distant past. When subjected to precise tests, the fossilized remains of "Australopithecus Afarensis" (which some believe to be the

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ancestor of both Australopithecus and Homo, whose one extant example of an adult individual is only 107 cm tall with a 10-cm-diameter cranium), show signs that they are three and a half million years old. The subsequent million-year period is a mystery to modern science—only later are specimens of the Homo and Australopithecus species found. Human ancestors of the Homo species had been living at the same time with the Australopithecus for approximately one million years, until the last one inexplicably disappeared from the face of the earth. What guarantees that it didn't actually "slip" into a shape we cannot even imagine? Huge periods of time still remain a great enigma, and the shaky reconstruction of hominid development contains a lot of puzzles. Dozens of species might have existed, about which we know nothing today. As described in the language of traditional science, a certain number of species may have "died out" or been transformed into something else, thus divided forever from the progression that eventually led to humankind.

Hamvas's theory could also be connected with a slightly different, mystical version of human history, based upon Rudolph Steiner's anthrophosophic conception of the Polar, Hyperborean, Lemurian, and Atlantian phases of the earth's development. Steiner's assertion that during the Atlantian era the human body was formed and developed in accordance with this spiritual shape is an interesting one. "[The] corporeal constitution of the more spiritual man was soft, vivid and full of expression, and that of the man of lesser spirituality was rude, with corporeal shapes immovable and stiff." Today's human body originated from the thickening and hardening of the Atlantian man. But, in the Atlantian era, allegedly, there was a group of consecrators practicing the skill of extrasensory perception or "higher spiritual powers." When these beings came under the influence of evil temptations, they began to misuse their powers in order to satisfy lower instincts, passions, and greed. Because their corporeal constitution depended on their spiritual characteristics, a strain of monstrous creatures developed, but, fortunately, they didn't survive the Atlantian era.

As for *The Secret Record*, it is worth noting that here one is not dealing with the pessimistic prophecy of some ambitious occultist, but with a warning that such a course of events could be more than likely, if mankind does not find the strength for basic spiritual purification. Later, I will discuss Hamvas's solution for escaping a slide into an evolutionary blind alley. But, before doing that, let us consider the connection between Hamvas's views and the problem of interpreting the transformational motif in Kafka's work.

Never before in literature, and all of art, has such a somber possibility of mankind's transformation been presented as a conscious allegory. Evil

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apparitions and monsters had appeared as already-realized beings without any awareness of their human ancestry and prehistory. Mr. Hyde and Frankenstein are exceptions that should be excluded from this discussion, because their transformations were a result of conscious human intervention. Shöngauer, Bosch, and others present bizarre creatures that have already realized their "secret ideal." In some of Kafka's stories animals act as narrators. The meaning of transformation in *The Metamorphosis* diverges radically from a similar theme in "A Report for the Academy," in which a monkey becomes a man. This is one of few Kafka stories in which irony, in the basic sense of the word, is found.

Actually, together with other, similar motifs, metamorphosis appears in many national fables. Among mythological creatures, Proteus is probably the most remarkable embodiment of elemental transformational power. In the *Odyssey*, when he is attacked by Menelaus, Proteus successively transforms himself into a lion, a dragon, a wild boar, running water, and a leafy tree before being forced to answer Menelaus' questions in human language. This is probably an archetypal picture testifying to the original unity of various manifestations of life, which, it would seem, is made of pliable material formed in accordance with the outcome of the conflict between good and evil. This image of the original unity of life, in a purely theoretical sense, could be comprehended as an illustration of Hamvas's and Steiner's convictions.

In fact, the case described in Kafka's story does not entirely correspond to Hamvas's view of an ideal toward which humankind secretly directs itself. Fettered by the mechanisms of modern alienation, Gregor Samsa is transformed into a harmless, sterile being, unable to express aggression. However, he becomes a being which, with the passing of time, possesses the capacity to enjoy the value of the creative spirit, which emerges as a kind of compensation or "last wish." It is a slightly different, discouraged and dejected Chirihau who emerges, but one who, with undiminished violence, threatens to bury the remains of human creative power. If the inhuman nature of a community deforms an individual and exhausts it by creating a particular kind of hunger, it is easy to suspect that somewhere, some force is directing such a scenario. In Kafka's story the family first accepts Samsa's transformation as a tragedy; then they try to conceal it. Finally, they publicly reveal their intention to eliminate the insect. The engineers of twentieth-century projects to build a leviathan have been just as considerate, and their triumphalism resembles the Samsa family idyll depicted in the last pages of *The Metamorphosis*.

If the development of a fetus from conception to birth presents an ontogenetic picture of the past phyllogenetic development of mankind, then Kafka's story is actually a cheerless prediction of the possible future

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direction of phyllogenetic development. Kafka's story is an allegory, but Hamvas's idea should not be regarded in terms of figurative meaning. It is unambiguously about a real hazard. Hamvas describes that hazard with the sagacity of a mystical consecrator, and Kafka presages it with the strength of his artistic imagination. By incessantly varying the theme that possesses him, one he tries to express in many stories, he makes us wonder whether Samsa's mishap could, under certain circumstances, befall all humanity.

Magicians claim there is a medicine for lycanthropy. In order to defend himself from Circe's witchcraft, Odysseus has to taste the heated root of Allium sativa, the same plant currently used for protection against the Evil Eye. Among Native Americans, if one wishes to escape the temptation of becoming a raven, it is necessary to avoid the obscure *brujo*'s skill. Further, a humble life will likely protect one from the possibility of becoming an opossum in another incarnation. If one has firmly decided not to become the ancestor of some subsequent millennium's Chirihau, an option still remains. The power of the imagination and a generous artistic vision are capable of reprogramming one's secret ideal. Except that, according to Hamvas, in order to prevent evolutionary deviation, it is necessary to protect oneself from the activities of elementars, bastards, and similar psychic bacterium as they crowd in from the lowest spheres of the astral world, threatening to multiply wherever spiritual depravity prevails. Salvation lies in practicing spiritual hygiene: attending to virtues, endeavoring to remain a man and not to stray when tempted by the serpent or ant's sins.

In the end, it is a puzzle why the story about Samsa's transformation, when it is so widely known, is not considered in depth in *The Secret Record*. Bela Hamvas had little interest in modern art. His assertion that "all of modern art is merely the apotheosis of an insect" speaks volumes. He did not perceive the germination of a new, more generous humanist ideal in the art movements of the twentieth century; he was in conflict with his time, which bore him a grudge and forced him to live out his life unrecognized and unrewarded.

Our task here has been easy—it consisted mostly of putting together similarities and pointing out things that are obvious. It would be naive to conclude that all the pieces of the mosaic have been finally put into place, or that Kafka's enigmatic parable has gained a perfectly expounded rational component. What remains for critics is to pick further, fruitlessly trying to subordinate Kafka's multi-signifying image to a rational idiom. But, this effort has always testified to the strange power of artistic creation and its entirely disputable ontological status. That power is not likely to be of this world, where the intellect predominates, but of the world in which, thanks to man's higher spiritual powers (if Hamvas's gloomy predictions do not

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come true), the materializing of symbolic universes will become a high art. Or, as the anonymous protagonist of another Kafka story said: "If a man followed metaphors faithfully, he would become a metaphor himself and by that be free of daily worries." But, first, we have to shackle an impassioned vulture and bring a disgraced beetle back to life.

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GEORGE KONRÁD

Aphorisms on the Durability of Jews

For Jews, there is no intermediate metaphysical station between man and god, there is no god-man, no man become god.

That which is human should just stay that way.

Moses is a person, David is a person, Jesus is a person, all our fellow-men, all frail, and the truth of each one is partial.

And the messiah can let people await his arrival, he needn't hurry.

A Jew doesn't need to be religious; if he doesn't believe, well then he doesn't believe God, who is not human, but rather the eternal presence which sees and hears a person, even listens, God is spoken to by the religious.

Jews provide the biblical metaphor of the world.

A trans-national people in nation-states! Which direction should its heart pull? Toward the nation-state, or world Jewry? This is the kind of question that doesn't need to be asked, because either answer is an undesirable constraint. A person's freedom lies in weighing concrete alternatives and deciding according to principles, heart, taste, and mood.

There is a Jewish global people, which now more calmly considers itself Jewish, because it has less need to be frightened, yet still, everywhere in the world, it feels some uncertainty, because there is not only a Jewish global people, but global anti-Semitism as well. The Israelis cannot feel entirely secure either; there too, there are neighbors who would kill them just for being Jews. There was once a renowned, later deified Jew who was killed for his words. It is a Jewish custom to get into that kind of situation. It is a Jewish custom to give words such exaggerated significance, even to die for them. It is Jewish history that a person is killed for being what they are.

The people of most nations can be melted in; it is relatively hard to do so with Jews. The something that preserves them unveils itself even on Jews who camouflage themselves—even if the disguise is long-standing and

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self-imposed. Following the Zionists, the Diaspora Jews are also beginning to resign themselves to being what they are, and are no longer even so dejected about it. They pop out of the box; here and there they appear with their portable God, embodiments of a peculiar strategy. Staying incognito has become less typical of worldly Jews. Why should they conceal their Jewishness? Sometimes they stray instead toward the tastelessness of boasting.

The person who is who he is, up to the level of civil courage, individually, is a type of person that can awaken ill temper. Jews were most likely in advance of the Germans in modernization, in choosing Western values; to Jews, universalism was more self-evident. The revenge for this was Nazism. Actually, the Germans wished for the same thing: to enter the world at large. The European Jews lost; they were not watchful enough, and they weren't good enough strategists; had they seen more clearly, most of them would have escaped. They did not defend themselves resolutely enough. Today, Israel and world Jewry stand virtually behind Jews living in any country. Jewish consciousness is stronger and less paradoxical in Isreal and America than in Central Europe, not especially far from Auschwitz.

The Jew transcends, but to where? In the direction of the familial paradise. Continuation is the meaning of his life, and in general, his wife is his conscience. Jewish utopia is the friendly dinner table. Heaven and the chorus of angels are no better than this. Wife, children, grandchildren, relatives, friends, guests, locals, and travelers around the table set for a holiday. It is difficult to conceive of anything more attractive; Jews wish all others this same utopia. This is the other-world, other also in the sense that it is safe for the moment, that no one breaks in for the moment, that the soldiers' horses do not stamp under the window. Children remember this bit of warmth from the stove, familial happiness, when everyone loved one another; perhaps this was the other world, the one the Jew searches for here in earthly life, because he doesn't think he needs to die before he can enjoy it.

Jews do not mention or promise the eternal life of the soul. They acknowledge death. They do not believe we are consoled for all suffering; they were able to reconcile faith in God with the acceptance of human fate; for this reason I would call them ethical realists. They do not postpone salvation to the afterworld, to the supposed eternal life following death. They do not believe there exists heavenly correction, compensation, reconciliatory reparation for the mistakes of earthly life. What happened happened and can no longer be changed. You may make mistakes, but there is no heavenly safety net.

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The real happening is not over there, but rather here, this is it. And though this is sometimes a vale of tears and scandalous too, it is mainly the terrain of work and weekday joys and sorrows. Well yes, the Jews say, one has to work; it's been this way since Cain; we lost our innocence; we bit into knowledge, into sensuality and into sin; carefree childhood is no more.

The ethics of adulthood—that is what wiser Jews search for; it is evident in their estimation that learning is worth more than fighting. Jews concede the world is powerful, even too powerful, and that unpredictable forces rage within it, so one must adjust to it, take account of it, acknowledge it, understand it, and after negotiating, one must come to terms with it, to find the least deleterious among the possibilities, without illusions about the lesser evil, but all this is not enough, because to this one must add something more.

Being chosen means that we all suppose it of ourselves, because we may each be chosen for something, and we try to discover what it might be. We give ourselves tasks according to the voice of our conscience. Only with helpful self-discipline is the adult possible. Those who insult others instead of working are not adults. There are non-adult public opinions. Being offended is not a realistic spiritual condition, and does not favor prosperous survival.

Jews would have cause to be offended as an orientation, but more mature Jews counsel against it; one must not retreat into a shell, but rather initiate, so that such misfortune cannot happen again. Jews have work to do; the world is interconnecting, being sewn together; the process must be promoted, because it is what prevents newer holocausts. The murder of anyone's child is unbearable, and it must be particularly unbearable to the Jews. The task of Jews is to learn from Auschwitz, and to reject everything that is like it, resembles it, validates and excuses it, regardless of who is presently threatened by genocide.

The *galut,* the Diaspora, is the field of reality; the *galut* is parallel to globalization, dispersal all over the globe: this means that Jews—while remaining faithful to themselves—must learn, must come to know this planet and its inhabitants; they must help in the work of reminding humanity that it is related.

Transcendence is familial continuity, plus self-control, or I might say the humility that makes it possible. Life subordinated to self-discipline and purity laws, in which bodily habits gain religious significance, and thus sanctified are lifted out of the sea of the profane, just as the holiday is an exception in the row of weekdays. The Jew wants to protect this realistically attainable worldly afterworld, or to help it to safety in the shadow of menacing power, to help it survive. The outside should be modest, the inside rich. To smuggle the holiday into the world, so there can *be* a holi-

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day. The compulsory Sabbath is the order of intellectual distancing, to reflect upon our life. The Sabbath is created and preserved for this purpose. We cleanse ourselves, eat well, and look into the candle's flame.

Like the writer of these lines, many worldly Jews do not distinguish the Sabbath: they try to make a Sabbath out of every day. They do not distinguish the sacred and the profane; they like them to play into each other. They do not attend the synagogue; they read instead, and though it may be out of pride, or laziness, they rarely like to become entangled in collective rituals. All of world literature is theirs. Every good book, every work of art they admire constitutes a higher authority. Non-Jews should also regard as their own all of Judaica, from the bible up to the present day. This text is also Judaica, and no less Hungarica. Every work of every Jewish author—regardless of the language it was written in, can be regarded as Judaica as well. The works of Jewish authors contain their way of thinking and their sensitivity, but if the work in question is really a work of art, then the nationality of the author is perhaps not irrelevant, but certainly not of primary importance. The significant work crosses borders, cultures, centuries. The worldly person chooses and is interested in all kinds of sacred books, but the "sacred" books of a worldly Jew are the ones they choose. Worldly Jews choose their own sacramental objects. Though they can see orthodoxy as beautiful, they do not spend as much time on ritual obligations as those require. Instead, they have personal rituals; they regard as their own that which appeals to them.

To be a Jew is an extraordinary obligation to study. One must be familiar with all the national civilizations with which Jews are involved, or have closer contact. This is especially true for the Diaspora Jew, because Jews in Israel are just as apt as any other people to overdo national navel-gazing. They are so occupied with their own affairs that they have little attention left for the world at large, unsurprisingly, as the affairs of the neighborhood are often life and death matters. The Diaspora Jews also have their own subcultural egotism, but they are compelled to understand the local sensitivities, and in order to prevent anti-Semitism from becoming a menace, they attempt to neutralize local xenophobic romanticism in their own way. To save their skin, they must influence public opinion, because if they do not perform this work, it may come to pass that they get killed, and of course this has happened even when they tried diligently to carry out the work, but did not succeed.

In the worldly Jew's circle of friends there are Jews, but there are non-Jews as well. They eat what the locals eat, everywhere. They do not suggest or imply the things the locals like are impure and unholy. They do not

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distinguish themselves by dress or hairstyle, because they would consider that pointless eccentricity. At most, they distinguish themselves unwittingly. Why only unwittingly? Are they afraid to identify themselves? Do they not want to acknowledge being Jews? I can hear the accusing question. But I never wear anything folkloristic anywhere. Actually, I consider even my immediate material environment accidental. The environment does not impede me in deeper thinking. I am loath to stand out willfully; I am not a concretist-animist. I do not wear my religion or world view on my person as an emblem. I have never worn any kind of badge in my lapel. Most likely, secularization will continue; people want to dispose of their free time themselves, and only occasionally to take part in collective church services they feel are too long. They are reserved in their appreciation of religious rituals, whose essence is that we obey, lower our heads before the eternal, and bow frequently.

Jews come in as many kinds as there are people. What makes a person a Jew is saying they are one. If they say they are, then this state of affairs probably concerns them; they mull over it, even feel some commonality with other Jews, living and dead. It is infrequent for someone of non-Jewish origin to declare themselves Jewish. Every other definition is uncertain, the only sure criterion of Jewish identity is if a person calls him/herself a Jew, and this is so even if neither mother nor father is Jewish.

Greater integration is good for Jews: they become one among many. Mass anti-Semitism is not normal in the EU, because the different being neighbors is increasingly normal. The relationship of worldly citizens of big cities to religions resembles their relationship to national cuisines: they enter alternately the restaurants of various nationalities, and do not eat the same dish (*solet*) every Saturday.

Autonomist isolation is not in the interests of Diaspora Jews. It is not to their advantage to descend from the major to the minor circuit, and to develop a minority intimate culture (which possibly comes to require positive discrimination). A more fortunate choice is to validate their own colors while being woven into the whole. Diaspora Jews have a stake in local integration; the prophet Jeremiah already saw it this way and counseled it. Jewish citizens living in various places wish to be a part of the society and culture of their country-city. What does integration mean? It means they respect the law, pay taxes, and participate in public life; they speak the local language either as their native language or as a learned language, they become familiar with the culture of the local majority, and try to augment it. On the other hand, Jewish communities are loosely connected

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parts of a kind of virtual world Jewish community: they are related to each other and to the Jews of Israel.

Being in the world is accompanied by the obligation to tolerate unusualness. To unusualness and the accompanying discrimination, as a challenge, several responses are possible—escape, mimicry, termination of the distinction and with it, likely the most disadvantageous—discrimination. Within this, a possible procedure is the redirection of anger against Jews to another target, or rather to a particular group of Jews, the orthodox, the recent immigrants, the not yet assimilated, the strange and the conspicuous, the capitalists, or the communists, then to the dissidents of communist regimes. These endeavours at disguise do not fool the real anti-Semite and cannot successfully deflect genuine anti-Semitism, and what's more, they are morally suspect.

For the most part, Jews speak the language of the country they inhabit, participate in its life, work for it; they are loyal citizens, even going beyond a routine presence to a more deeply sympathetic identification. However, they bring new elements into the discussion as well, the serious and ironic forms of critical self-reflection, for example. Jews are passive in the parlor game of hating the neighbors.

German Jews' hatred of the French, and French Jews' hatred of the Germans was milder than that exhibited by the local majority. They were cooler about sharing nationalist public sentiment, though there are counter-examples in great numbers, but all together, they manifested an amount of neutrality in conflicts they saw as artificially pumped up, all the more so as there were Jews on the other side as well, possibly even relatives. Why should a German Jew and a French Jew hate each other?

It is logical that the Jews were more interested in peace than others. They accomodated nationalist rancor with extreme reluctance, whether the hater was a great nation or a small one, for long-standing imperialist hatreds were nurtured not only by great powers; smaller nations also did their part in their own neighborhoods.

It is logical that a relatively high number of Jews participated in every sort of pacifist organization, and that they took the international workers movement in this direction, but the Bolshevik Jews' decision to break with democratic constitutionalism was a perilous error, a suicidal mistake; they undermined their own security by exchanging formal freedoms for an ideological scheme they deemed substantive, essential, one which deified a certain group of people and demonized the others. The abandonment of the ghetto was made possible by enlightened liberalism, to turn on it was betrayal and self-destructive stupidity.

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The people of every nation have a complicated and significant relationship with the Jews living there; some of the relationships are especially complicated and burdened, like the Germans'. Non-Jews can also say: "Jews are citizens just like us, let there be no racial distinction! And now Jews themselves initiate the making of racial distinctions? If the Jews stand apart, they will be made to stand apart by others as well. Do they really want this?" If they consider themselves a people, then they do the same as the other minority fundamentalists and autonomists. There are ethnic hard liners in every community. Isn't it a more fortunate and safer choice to stay behind the fortifications of constitutional patriotism?

In the big cities, plural societies are being formed, with members mainly drawn from the majority nationality, but other groups are sewn in too, retaining some of their particularity, consciousness, language, unique civilization, and keeping contact with another country, where they came from, or where their relatives are, a country which most likely stands up in their defense. The limits of integration are blurry by nature: hard, sharp definitions do not fit, since there are many Jews throughout the world who are bourgeois, non-practicing, and possibly even avoid the life of organized denomination; they may nevertheless have several Jewish relatives, friends, and acquaintances; in other words, they are connected to Jewishness by real life bonds, connected to Jewish society, which can even be called a global society.

Following emancipation, ethnic nationalism expelled Jews from the community of those with equal rights. Zionism was a realistic response—another ethnic-nationalist solution. The nation-state is the key concept of this option, the sovereignity of the nation-state as the value of first rank. Seeing Israel, I believe this alternative was rightful and successful, as one solution.

For the Jews who remain in the Diaspora, another realistic response is a kind of worldly universalism compatible with Western-type liberal democracies and with the position protecting human rights first and foremost, a position offering security to Jews, among others. Outside of the state of Israel, worldly Jews demand ethnic-national self-definition that is as non-restricting as possible. Talent transcends religious-ethnic circumscription. Important for the Jewish minority is the question of behavior it considers exemplary with respect to the non-Jewish majority. The societal-political-cultural position of the Jews is plural; it is difficult for them to conceive of themselves as a homogenous national minority with common interests and positions. There are places where they represent themselves

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through one or more bodies; in some places they manifest themselves instead through professional or political associations, or as members of parties—not alongside issues or conflicts with ethnic dimensions. The interest of Jewry is for its conflicts to be decided within the framework of general fairness.

There exists a post-modern re-nationalization, which obviously has a Jewish variant as well, but it should be known that this is the same mentality that was at work in the Balkans, the one that nurtures European minority conflicts, and slides from protection of rights to passionate separatism.

The analyst can bring together Jewish writers in his/her study, and if they are so inclined, Jewish writers can meet in person too, and think together, but they should not ally themselves in the "national interest," because doing so will unjustifiably change something implicit into something explicit.

It is in the natural interest of those Jews living outside of Israel, also, to consider the country they inhabit their home. The other pole says: they don't like me here, I don't like them either. Let's go into a shell, become an ethnic island. But the person who desires the foregoing probably goes to Israel. Furthermore, Jews living in the various nation-states seem to be spending less effort on the repeated assertion that they are just like the members of the majority nationality surrounding them. They are not really the same, and everyone perceives this; by and by, so do they. They may proceed from this truth, in consciousness of Auschwitz, but without offending the majority's sense of justice. The ethical position, however, compels the undertaking of strategic responsibility. If the majority has accepted liberal democracy, the minority should not stand away from it.

I am not attracted to categorizing and cataloging writers according to their religious-national affiliation. Most adjectives alongside the word "literature" are unnecessary; the more emphatic the adjective, we can be sure, the more insubstantial the noun; in other words, the literature in question is that much weaker. If one must have a particular grouping, then according to the language of the original text is still the most self-evident and the least gratuitous method.

It is a fact that an increasing number of Jews perceive that they are members of a global people; this is due in part to the state of Israel, partly to the post-war Jewish intellectual surge and to globalization in general, or if you will, global embourgeoisement. It may be said that since the Second World War, Jewish consciousness and identity have grown somewhat

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stronger; moreover, they have done so in a spirit of realism: Jews are a paradoxical people. They have bonds to the place they inhabit, and they require respect for this multilateral solidarity. Such multiple affiliation is characteristic of all peoples, of national minorities, and in every democratic country the majority must accept it. Mutual acceptance of the complexity of life and emotions is not compatible with radical forms of nationalism, because permeated by them, the majority does not approve of certain citizens of its nation-state cultivating solidarities that reach beyond the borders, or of certain citizens feeling they belong to more than one place, but the minority doesn't tolerate such complexity either, if it brims with the logic of radical nationalism, because that logic compels the individual to make sharp, either/or choices—decide what you are, Jew or [enter the name of the majority nationality here]. If you are a Jew who happens to live in country X, then concern yourself mostly with Jewish affairs, and do not try to identify with one or the other interest, issue, or group of the national majority, because that is currying and treason.

Where the charge of treason can appear in the discussion, fundamentalism is at home, a spirit that straightforwardly abhors the idea of dual or multiple identity, and wants to prove one of the two is false, fake, that it does not exist. To me, the Diaspora Jews are more convincingly regarded as the experimental subjects of multi-level, dialogic consciousness.

For a few minutes, let us allow ourselves to daydream of utopian trends. The second millenium was the age of rigid consciousness in the ruling ideologies. It was possible to declare one or another way of thinking criminal, and to persecute it. Today, we don't know what will happen, but we open the door to the future. We imagine that the people of the third millenium will inform themselves more in the direction of learning, knowledge, information, the spirit/intellect, art fantasy, free time, individualism. From a growing number of building elements, people intuitively look for the combination that suits them. In the era of plentiful life-destiny choices, it will be normal for a person to know something others don't, and to be needed by several others, somewhere. The taste and egoism of talent will be defining; consequently, humility will not be typical; free choice will be, probably the free choice of humility, but curiosity will be typical in any case.

Can humankind live without enemies? How can humanity vent its impulse to kill? Probably aggression will become individualized too, because murder was and remains the most extreme act. Besides the individualization of aggression, the battle of religious fundamentalisms may

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also be anticipated, possibly connected to the underworld. I don't know where aggression will spring from its lair, but people will have cause to fear their fellow humans; of this I am certain. The only question is whether the killing will require some kind of moral-sounding explanation appealing to the common good.

What is the first interest of Jews? That Auschwitz should not happen again! To stand up against legalized discrimination, to acknowledge respect for human rights. Auschwitz is impossible in a world that honors relation. For this reason, Jews' interests are in universalist points of view and within these, in European cohesion.

In other words, there is truth to the anti-Semitic charge that Jews are interested to a greater degree in non-hostile dialogue that crosses borders and being on negotiating terms with other forces in the world; there is also some truth to the notion that Jews view passionate local disputes skeptically and prefer to place themselves in the position of third party, or understanding mediator.

It is not libelous to state that, by and large, Jews are sympathetic to cultural pluralism, and prefer to be active in areas where there is less rage, giving advantage to less knotted conditions; they place a higher value on possible compromise than on principled intransigence, though we know plenty of Jews whose thinking is monolithic, tenacious, and intransigent. The more dovish, however, believe truth is not the triumph of their own position, but rather of compromise. It is not good to win leaving the other beaten, humiliated, and filled with a desire for revenge.

The Diaspora forced Jews to acquire a many-sided knowledge of the world; they knew—they had to know—markets, life, culture, morality, and customs existed elsewhere too, that the foregoing had to be considered, and that it was improper to disparage them just for being different. A greater degree of respect for others was an inescapable consequence of the Diaspora, along with skepticism about blustering self-praise.

They were also able to learn that differing interests, needs, and actors far from one another could be linked; they recognized the value of network organization and learned practical relativization, though they tended toward the pessimism of "nothing's new under the sun" and "everything bad comes back again"; they were nevertheless able to value the world at large and to look toward the future with curiosity and confidence.

Jews are, by necessity, carriers of globalization. Not all Jews are clustered in the land of Israel, which cannot be said to be especially large. As they are used to mobility, they need the whole of the globe in which to disperse. It is good for mobile persons to be able to wander

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from the land of their birth, but retain the means and right to return from time to time; it is natural for them to have more than one residence, and to switch from time to time, either within the country or beyond its borders.

The duality and dialectic of the citizen and the traveller are generally familiar to Jews: those who leave like to arrive home as well; some of them can attribute metaphysical significance to national borders; others do not want to give themselves over to their impulse to settle, not anywhere in the world, not even in Israel. They come and go, and it is not possible to deprive them of this freedom.

If they succeed relatively well on the world market and in the most diverse local competitive fields, I would explain this by referring to the surplus energy liberated on departing and entering, and of course to the advanced age of the Jewish people, its accumulated life-strategical experience, passed on, made into tradition in one way or another.

In the case of Jewry, it is not possible to disregard the link between contingency and substance, metaphysics couched in flesh, the inseparability of the physical and the spiritual/intellectual, accidental, and imperfect individuals carrying within themselves something symbolic, something characteristic of the whole of world Jewry.

Here is a people thrown into history, able to remain the subject of its own existence through nearly all its scattered life, and when the Jewish upper crust no longer wished to bear the self-designation and other, largely painful, consequences of being chosen, practically speaking, for exclusion and persecution, it then had to suffer probably the greatest blow in its history, the holocaust, which I do not bring into causal connection with the conduct of the Jews, but which possibly could have been avoided with more farsighted strategy by them, if, for example, Jewish radicals of the Left had not attacked democratic constitutionalism, and hadn't thus provided example, argument, reference, and validation for the counterrevolution and dictatorship of the extreme Right.

This is a people that does not like being defined, and eludes every definition. Perhaps it feels they are a prison. Nor is it enthusiastic about those who are of it, the Jews, wanting to define it. It is a people that likes to keep open the possibility of decamping, because it knows the ground can suddenly start to burn under its feet, because it knows that insanity comes out in patches on the face of the globe, largely unpredictably, because sometimes even the occasional crackpot is capable of driving mad the multitude of sensible people, and not even the greatest of wisemen can gaze into the

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distant future. The unpredictability, unforeseeability but conceivability of the blow made Jews familiar with networks. Knowledge is the property with which changing location is relatively least difficult, the one whose operation elsewhere is within the realm of possibility. There is no really secure place; the crack-brained are many around Israel too; some kind are necessary throughout the globe. We can be annihilated most readily in war; thus our stake is in peace everywhere in the world.

More than many others, European Jews are familiar with the prospect that a person can suddenly be killed by organized, armed hatred. The idea of democratic equality of rights, opposing the system of feudal prerogatives and discriminations, was originally a European idea, and brought with it the emancipation of the Jews: if people have equal rights, then so do Jews. In the twentieth century, however, the notion of feudal prerogatives returned, this time in a collectivized version, in the fascist romanticism of the *herrenfolk* (ruler nation), which democratized the concept of nobility by extending it to the entire people, the whole majority nationality, supposedly entitled to trample other nations and peoples underfoot. The myths of the *herrenfolk* and the pernicious pariah nation presume and complement each other; one does not exist and cannot exist without the other.

Universalism—one dimension of which is European integration—frees Jews from their constraints; in other words, it is good for Jews. Before emancipation, these constraints were forms of feudal and religious discrimination; in the twentieth century, however, they were modernized, and now it was the nationalist-etatist spirit which restricted or totally excluded the Jews, using a few innovations in anti-Jewish phraseology. Livelihood and lifestyle tied Jews to Europe. In their hopes if not elsewhere, they did not believe Europe to be the land of bondage, and they were not there only out of obligation, but by choice as well. Europe, however, acquiesced to despotism, and twice in the twentieth century, America represented the spirit of European humanism; it was done partly by those former-Europeans who had emigrated to America, and were beyond ethnic nationalism, those who saw swearing by the democratic constitution as the most significant symbol of belonging to the nation. I would not call American nationalism ethnic, but rather constitutional. America used force to insist on the idea of the state of law, and led the Europeans back to the discipline of the state of law. Protection of the lives of Europeans calls for international supervision of the individual nation-states, recognizing that protection of life, the injunction that the continent's inhabitants do not kill one another, is of a higher order than the idea of unlimited national sovereignty.

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The lasting presence and dispersion of the Jews in Europe demand metaphysical dialogue with the Christian societies of Europe. They demand renewal of the definition of European humanism, so that religions should not be inhibitors of free contact between people. The Biblical people also have a part in the shaping of modern humanism. The fundamental book partly held in common, along with the mobility, economic activity, and understanding of the Jews, reduced the authority of irrational barriers. If people recognize the humanity in each other, they do not kill each other. The first lesson of humanism—it is possible to live without enemies. The notion *thou shalt not kill* stands at the center of the humanist idea. As a substitute for killing, it suggests competition in sports, economy, the world of ideas and images. It is a fundamental European interest that every European nation be woven into European discipline, that it not be possible for the leaders of one or another nation-state to go insane and blunder into extreme aggression. European humanism is a defense against national hysteria and it aims at the minimalization of aggression. The carrier of European humanism is embourgeoisement. Two ideas opposed one another: the unification of the continent under the rule of one nation and the voluntary association of nations with equal rights. The idea of empire versus that of democratic feudalism. The idea of a hierarchy of nations and peoples is quite abstract, but the mass murder that is its consequence is horribly concrete. European humanism is a vigilant critique of ideology, because it presumes reasonably that the national (religious, class, etc.) communities are wont to praise themselves too much, and to debase other communities, even probably to attempt to destroy them. Horrible acts are possible when abstract propositions suppress empathy, when empathy is outlawed. In contrast, worldly humanism is the very adventure of understanding ourselves and each other. The various forms of anti-Semitism regard Jews as the carriers of globalization, and not without cause. If we recognize plural identity, then local Jewish identities are connected naturally to distant ones, then it is normal for me to be at home in Budapest and to be present in San Francisco at the meeting of Jewish writers.

The next millenium will be the millenium of dialogue in place of combat, the millenium of dialogue and debate with each other and with ourselves. The morality of the novel will be the morality of the world. All the figures in a novel have their own truth. The author distributes him/herself among the figures, but is able to see them from above as well, to move them, like the chess-player. The art of balance actually supports present-day Western civilizations. The art of balance draws the poles into the system, and integrates the extremes into the bourgeois middle, puts

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them into place, having understood them, and gets past them. The great crimes stem from polarization, complete endorsement of one pole and complete rejection of the other. Radical distinction of the proper from the improper—execution. The warrior is being sublimated. Another type of soldier has become fashionable, one who doesn't want to kill, the peace-keeper, the peacemaker, the one who protects humanity even from itself and its environment.

Since success is only moderately predetermined, and anyone can be a winner in an increasing number of fields, the emancipation of talent is perceivable, here, at the turn of the millenium; it is connected to the third industrial revolution, the global net, and that which we call the society of knowledge. The restlessness of talent may be behind the revolutions and societal changes. Talent opens a path for itself, and actors in the most diverse media try to become personalities, a transformation for which intention is not sufficient. The closer we come to the society of knowledge, the higher the value of talent. Embourgeoisement is accompanied by the emancipation of talent. The intellectual inequality of people can emerge if their legal-political equality is secured. This is actually the teleology of embourgeoisement: birth, feudal prerogatives, and subcultural prejudices should impede the emergence of individual abilities as little as possible. Talent is capable of making surprising appearances; accidental sparks ignite it. If the agenda is seduction instead of combat, then the multi-dimensional person seems the most interesting. This is the age of unexpected, surprising, and apt ideas. The manager would like to be a wizard. Seduction competition. Behavior is transformed into art. All things considered, this change is not unfavorable for the Jews.

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ALEKSANDAR TIŠMA

From *The Book of Blam*

The Mercury is the most prominent building in Novi Sad. Not the tallest, because it is overpowered by the steep glaciers of the high-rises and the sturdy wreaths of apartment houses that the postwar population explosion strewed over the fields at the edge of town. Nor the most attractive, because its builder and first owner, a prewar businessman, viewed it as a commercial venture, making the most of every square inch and avoiding costly ornamentation. And yet the Mercury, jutting into Main Square, one corner rounded like the stern of an ocean liner, running along broad, straight Old Boulevard in all its four-storied glory (and with its somewhat narrower decklike mansard) and boasting a continuous row of ground-level businesses, including a department store, a cinema, and a hotel with a restaurant and bar, is unquestionably the city's focal point.

Miroslav Blam, who lives in the Mercury's mansard, understands the exceptional, almost lofty status of the building and of himself as a part of it. He is proud of his status, though secretly, reticently so, not having come by it on his own merit. When he writes his return address, he does not use the generally accepted "Mercury Building" (the name comes from the name of the original owner's company); he uses the official though more complicated "1 Old Boulevard," which he also uses when giving his address to acquaintances, and only if they slap their foreheads and say, "Why, that's the Mercury!" does he nod hesitantly, as if yielding to the unofficial, slightly wanton designation, while in fact concealing his pleasure. Or, rather, vacillating between pleasure and annoyance, because he dislikes being pigeonholed, even in so minor a detail.

Actually, the reason he is so fond of his Mercury mansard is that it is in the center of things yet remains a hideaway. Lift your eyes from any point in Main Square or the boulevard and you'll say, "That's where Blam lives." But try to make your way there and find him. First you have to be let into the building or slip past the janitor keeping an eye on the courtyard from his kitchen. Then you have to climb stairs and stairs—four flights' worth, each with dozens of doors and more than dozens of people living behind them, meddlesome people constantly lolling on the balconies—

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and only then will you come to the mansard level. And are you willing to knock at every door and ask for him? If you're too loud and conspicuous, he may hear you before you find him and thus remain eternally hidden. Yes, even if you do locate the door to his apartment. Because the mansard deviates unexpectedly from the pattern of the other floors, narrowing as it does to the width of a footpath, which, protected by an iron fence so people will not fall to the street, looks like a ship's promenade perched on what is entirely residential space.

Blam often visits this walkway, this place of celestial freedom, slipping out of his apartment through a passage tucked between the laundry room and drying room. Parading thus along the building's edge, he has a bird's-eye view of the Main Square's spacious rectangle and the narrow pointed spire of the cathedral that dominates it, or of the broad trough of Old Boulevard with its endless processions of cars and pedestrians, or the ravine of narrow Okrugić Street, perpendicular to the boulevard, and the tables in front of the hotel. True, he is so accustomed to these sights that he scarcely notices them, his eye resting rather on an uncommon detail, a lone, dark, pillowlike cloud that seems anchored to the cathedral's spire, or a pedestrian, or a pretty woman who keeps returning to the same place. He pauses at the railing, leaning his elbows on it, eager to take part, to merge with the crowd. He becomes the pedestrian, he becomes the waiting woman. He knows nothing about them, yet for that very reason he can string together images of facts and possibilities. The image of an accident that once took place there, the image of two beaming faces meeting for a tryst. The screech of brakes, a cry of horror that overcomes the crowd like a wind. She is married, but her husband is in jail for corrupting minors and she has phoned an old admirer and asked to see him. The pedestrian hit by the screeching car was Aca Krkljuš's father. Aca himself showed Blam the spot when he gave him his drunken account of what happened. His father's leg was amputated and he could no longer manage his leather workshop, so Aca had to take over and give up his own work and calling. As for the old admirer, he is probably frightened by the responsibility involved—after all, he has remained a bachelor (if he hadn't, the beautiful woman would never have asked to see him): he senses she wants him to replace her husband in the performance of certain familial duties as well as in bed. Aca, or the pedestrian whose choice of position on the street reminds Blam of Aca, seems to be surveying the terrain; he needs to make a sketch of it, a legal drawing, to support his indemnity case, which he has also told Blam about, while the man the woman has asked to see may have got the time and place wrong, mixed things up, because his memory is so poor. But the two people who are actually there waiting will in fact exchange a few glances and hastily thrown-together words; they will grow

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closer, realize their common bond in the losses they suffered on the same spot. They will begin to trust each other, and he will invite her for a drink or even (because he might well be Aca) suggest they take a load off their feet by going up to see Blam, Miroslav Blam, an old school friend, a friend also of my brother Slobodan, who died a tragic death in the war, Blam always comes to hear my band, my new pieces, he's the one I told about the accident two months ago, the accident that cost my father his leg and me my freedom, he lives right here and he has a wonderful wife, don't worry, I'll introduce you, he's very understanding, and a lawyer, well, kind of, and maybe he can give you some advice about getting your husband off, it's right here, right in the Mercury. . . .

A far-off ring, a knock on the door. Aca with his sagging cheeks, sagging nose, apologetically sagging shoulders, and listless expression suddenly looks amazingly like his dead brother. He pushes the pretty stranger in and introduces her with a quick smile.

"Is Miroslav in?" he asks, winking as if referring to a secret agreement.

"He's around here somewhere," Janja answers, giving him a curious look. "Gone for a walk. . . .I'll call him."

"No, no. Don't bother. We'll find him. Just point us in the general direction. We need some legal advice. You see, the lady's husband. . . ."

Now they are out again, squeezed together in the passage, because Aca wants to let her go first but also needs to show her the way, and she is rather heavy and afraid the wind will mess up her hair or lift her skirt.

The wind slams a door shut somewhere. Otherwise nothing happens. The two of them are still downstairs in front of the building; up here there is no one but Blam. His fellow tenants avoid the walkway. It is hot in summer and windy at all times. Should they feel the need for fresh air, they go out on the courtyard terrace, where they can drowse, shaded and sheltered, in deck chairs, where they can chat with a neighbor, read the papers, or take the children to play so the children won't disturb afternoon naps. The reason Blam likes the walkway is that he can count on being alone there, at least until someone comes looking for him. Only until then. Because if Aca were in fact to come up with his lady friend, determined to find him, or if there were a search warrant out for him (and eventually there has to be—he cannot imagine living his life without one, without another war), the very fact that the mansard was secluded would turn it into a trap. He would not be able to double back to the terrace: an armed patrol would keep the passage covered. Nor would he be able to duck back into the apartment except through a window: in case of a manhunt, search, raid, or blockade, all windows are closed, all curtains drawn. Those are the rules of the game and have been from time immemorial. All the tenants can do is

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peek through the blinds, stare wide-eyed and trembling at him out there while a man with a pistol appears in the doorway. Where can Blam turn? His heart is pounding; he presses against the railing, clutching it convulsively, his head bent over the side, his only way out. He refuses to let them corner him again, let him force him to await their orders and to comply; no, he'll jump, he'll swing his body into the air and plunge headfirst into the street as if diving into a swimming pool. He feels a cold stream of air rushing through his mouth, a void enveloping his shoulders, a lack of support, the vanishing borders of space. His legs flop as freely as a rag doll's, they come undone, his whole body loses its shape, its conventional solidity, his blood runs in all directions, everything falls apart, the whole world, the street he is about to crash into.

His hands tingle, his fingers burn, the bar of the railing digs into the bone. He spreads his hands, turns them, observes the red stripes slowly broaden and lose their intense hue. Meanwhile, down below, people keep strolling along the street, going about their business, stretching their legs. The stubborn pedestrian is still there, but the beautiful woman has disappeared; maybe the man she was waiting for actually came. They have no idea what is going on inside Blam; they cannot share it, they would not understand his fear, his terror, his certainty that the patrol will come for him and push him to the railing. What is wrong with him? Is he mad? Or is everyone mad but him? Though it amounts to the same thing. For if he is different from everyone, then he is a monster, a freak, an aberration, ripe for being split open and having his thoughts read, for being crammed into a cage and exhibited in an anthropological rather than zoological garden, exhibited naked, the better to be seen and poked at through the bars until he produces the incoherent howls and shrieks expected of him.

The bars behind him rattle: someone is letting down the blinds. The noise comes from the left, which means it is either the retired woman with bad lungs or someone in his apartment. He does not turn to see, however; he fears the sight he would offer to the person looking out of the window; a twisted head on a body still facing the street, the abyss, with a face showing signs of an overactive imagination, an imagination more real to Blam than anything going on behind his back. Yes, he admits to himself with embarrassment though with a certain malice as well. That intimate world back there, so sure of itself—Janja doing some sewing, perhaps, his little girl doing her homework—is very much a part of the manhunt, if not in its service. When passages are occupied, a home like that is disastrous. Any home is disastrous if it is alive, if you depend on it for your life's blood, if you cannot live without it. Then the bullets hit not only you, nor can you even fling yourself to the ground, take cover. There

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is no cover when you're burdened with love and the patrol is after you. There is no way out. You are being led to the altar to be sacrificed. They push you on, you can't turn back, your head hangs low.

His head hangs low as he waits to hear whether the noise will develop into a challenge, a cry of surprise, a death command. But he hears nothing more, nor has anyone seen him. He slowly turns and, keeping his eyes glued to the asphalt walkway, goes back to the passage. If he can slip through it unimpeded, he will avoid the apartment, the home, the trap, and direct his steps in the opposite direction, the stairs. He will run down the stairs to the street and freedom. He may even catch another glimpse of the pedestrian or the beautiful woman.

He does not, of course. They have disappeared in the interim, swallowed by the crowd, or perhaps they are still there but no longer recognizable. People look different when you are on a level with them. The proportions of their bodies change. The relation of one part to another. Formerly conspicuous curves—foreheads, noses, breasts, shoulders—flatten out, and limbs scarcely visible from above jut in all directions. New conditions of light, new reflections affect hair color, eye color, skin color. Clothes seem to hang differently, the new angle accentuating certain wrinkles and shadows while attenuating others. From above, a person's gait looks light and easy; at eye level, it is heavier, involving effort, with one foot always pressed to the ground. From below, it is clear that people are not propelled by an unknown force, not pulled on a transparent string by a concealed hand; they move by contracting their leg muscles and shifting the weight of their bodies in the direction they wish to go. Their connection with the earth is obvious. True, they push away from it, stand erect, but it remains part of them and to it they will return. At eye level, too, their variety—infant, girl, graybeard—arouses curiosity, but the progress of infant and girl and graybeard can be charted from start to finish and their mysteries unraveled.

The man who appears before Blam to have his mystery unraveled is a real estate agent by the name of Leon Funkenstein. Blam sees him while standing in front of the Mercury surveying the far side of the square from the cathedral to the Avala Cinema. The area is full of parked cars because the street beginning behind the Avala and once called Jew Street is now sealed off at the other end by New Boulevard and thus closed to traffic. It is the destination of many idle strollers like Blam.

Seeing Funkenstein, however, Blam interrupts his stroll. He has no reason to avoid him, though he did go out to be alone or, rather, to escape the manhunt, his private term for the onslaught of present and past

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encounters and experiences, of which Funkenstein is unfortunately a part. He is not sure the old man will recognize him. Blam was still a boy at the time Funkenstein came to the house. But in the past few years, he has given Funkenstein several opportunities to refresh his memory, calling attention to himself with a shy smile, a nod, a barely audible greeting when their eyes meet on a narrow street. But this time there is plenty of room—the whole square beckons Blam to former Jew Street—and Funkenstein stands at the far end of the square bending over the radiator of a dusty gray Fiat, his bald pate so far down that he seems to be sniffing as well as inspecting it.

But as so often happens when he wants to steer clear of someone, Blam directs his steps straight at the man, crossing the square in such a way as to be most visible, justifying his conspicuous route by curiosity. Watching him fiddle with the car, Blam suddenly wonders whether Funkenstein hasn't changed profession. It would be perfectly understandable, given that all rent-bearing properties have long since been nationalized, which leaves only small—and therefore cheap—single-family dwellings on the market like the house the Blams used to own in Vojvoda Šupljikac Square, the one that Funkenstein had sold for Blam's father, Vilim. But he sold it just before Blam's father died, so his father may not have received payment in full, or if he had, then he hadn't had time to spend it all and it had fallen into the hands of plunderers.

He chafes at the thought that he will eventually have to talk to Funkenstein, quiz him on the particulars of the sale of the house to allay his doubts. He realizes he has postponed the talk too long as it is (and postponed putting to rest the doubts), but now he turns his head in Funkenstein's direction and is surprised to find Funkenstein looking straight at him. He can hardly believe it, but there can be no doubt: from the old man's broad, pink face, still lowered over the Fiat's radiator, a pair of tiny but piercing brown eyes beneath unruly gray eyebrows and a shiny forehead are looking at him, Blam.

Blam pauses, whereupon Funkenstein straightens. The straightening does not much alter his spatial relation to the car—he is too short for that—but it does reveal his bold taste in clothes: he is wearing a white shirt with an apache collar over a pair of yellowish imitation-silk trousers. He sets his youthful outfit in motion by circling the car with a sprightly step—surprisingly sprightly for a body so stumpy—and plants himself in front of Blam.

"Hello, Mr. Funkenstein," Blam says, taken aback.

"Hello, hello," Funkenstein answers cordially, but without using Blam's name, which indicates Blam's assumption that Funkenstein would not be able to place him was correct. Funkenstein holds out his firm, fleshy hand, though casually, almost incidentally, and with no more than a glance at Blam's face. "What brings you here?" he asks, clearly aloof and quickly

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turning his small twinkling eyes from Blam to something over Blam's shoulder.

"Just out for a walk," says Blam, made uncomfortable by Funkenstein's lack of concentration, which obliges him to keep the conversation going. "Though now that I have you here, I thought I'd ask you about a house you sold a while back. Tell me, are you still in real estate?"

"Oh yes. Yes, of course I am." Funkenstein trains his swift, piercing glance on Blam, but immediately looks over Blam's shoulder again. "Got something to sell?"

"Not anymore," Blam says with a shrug. Suddenly he feels hurt by Funkenstein's indifference and decides to end the conversation, which was going nowhere anyway. "I see you're interested in cars now."

"In one only." Again Funkenstein glances up at Blam, questioningly this time, as if debating whether to trust him. "It's not mine, though. I'm watching it for a friend."

Blam, baffled, turns to see a large green car parked alone in the middle of the square. Suddenly Funkenstein grabs him by the arm and twirls him around. "Don't turn again!" he whispers, raising his wild, imperious eyebrows and pursing his rosy, wrinkled lips, the corners frothy with spit. "I don't want to call attention to myself."

Blam shifts uneasily, realizing that Funkenstein is using his bulk as a shield, that he, Blam, has taken the place of the dusty gray Fiat.

"Look! Look!" Funkenstein cries, triumphant. He is jumping up and down, bending over, peeking out from behind Blam like a child playing hide-and-seek. "See? They're getting on the bus!" Then, suddenly relaxed, he straightens his back and explains offhandedly, "It's a favor for an old friend, a business partner, actually. He's out of town for a while, and I'm keeping an eye on his wife. I knew she was up to something when I saw their car in the square. Well, she's gone off with a man on that bus. To his place, for sure."

From the direction of Funkenstein's gaze Blam can tell he is following the bus (with his eyes or in his mind's eye) that runs past the monument, on to the Danube, and into the part of town filled with new residential dwellings for newly arrived officials, following the dark, young, nattily dressed man and the tall blond woman on his arm, her strong thighs tightly encased in a blue skirt. If Funkenstein's "old friend" is Funkenstein's age, getting on to seventy, perhaps the couple is not so young as Blam imagined. Perhaps the whole thing is a sham. He gives Funkenstein a quizzical look.

But Funkenstein is on his way to the green car in the middle of the square, bypassing Blam as if he were an object. Blam notices that the bus waiting at the monument only a moment before has gone.

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"Where did you say your house was?"

Funkenstein has returned to Blam after looking over the car.

"I don't own it anymore, I told you," says Blam, annoyed. "It belonged to my late father. Vojvoda Šupljikac Square, number 7. You were his agent. It was the beginning of the war. I don't know if you remember."

"Vojvoda Šupljikac. . .Vojvoda Šupljikac. . ." Funkenstein mumbles to himself, lowering his head and pressing a short, fat index finger to his nose. Suddenly he looks up. "Is your name Blam?"

"Yes. So you do remember."

"Vaguely," he said. "Well, what is it?"

"I was just wondering whether my father ever got the money for the house. The whole sum, I mean. The man who bought it was a tailor. Hajduković, I believe his name was. But then he sold it to somebody else. . . ."

Funkenstein does not let him finish. "If I was the agent," he says curtly, placing his hands on his chest and stretching the white shirt, "you can be sure it was paid in full." He gives him a quick nod and holds out his hand. "Goodbye." And off he goes, stepping briskly on his short legs and wide feet in the direction of the monument.

Vojvoda Šupljikac Square lies not far from the center of town, in the maze of narrow old streets that now abut on the broad curve of New Boulevard. The houses form an oval around the square, and in its center is a neglected park surrounded by an iron fence with spikes bent out of shape by unruly arms and legs. The land has been so trampled that almost nothing grows there. The few benches are backless, their seats furrowed with lovers' initials that rain has broadened into illegible scars. Only the trees lining the fence have been able to withstand destruction; they are tall and venerable, and their leafy crowns rise above the square like a vast green umbrella.

Blam, too, was a participant in the destruction of this oasis. On his way home from school for lunch he and Čutura would jump over the fence, trample the grass, climb the trees, and eat the berries.

Before he made friends with Čutura, he had no idea that such things were possible or could give pleasure. He had climbed before, but only onto the hand pump of the well in the brick-paved courtyard of his house, where the sole reminder of nature was the flower bed running along the high, bare wall, which broke off abruptly at the separate apartment rented by a widow named Erzébet Csokonay. The wildest his childhood ever got was jumping from the cold, slippery pump onto the bricks and fighting with his younger sister Estera, which meant a scolding from his mother, or with Puba Šmuk, when Puba's mother came to visit the Blams and brought him along. The house was a fortress under invisible siege. Only relatives, friends of the family, and repairmen came to call—no strangers

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except for an occasional beggar. Guests could always count on homemade pastries and on fruit brought from the market and carefully washed.

Whenever he took walks with the family, holding hands with Estera (attired in white or navy blue like him) and walking in front of his parents, who kept nagging at them not to stray into the mud, Blam would look at the oval park through the gate, but he never asked the names of the trees that caught his eye by swaying gracefully in the breeze. For Blam a tree was a tree, something big and strong, yet pliant, alive, in cheerful contrast not only to the gray plaster of the street but also to the cartloads of raw, dry timber that arrived at the house at the end of every summer to be hewn into manageable chunks by woodcutters amid the buzz of saws and the smell of shavings and sweat. And while he was vaguely aware that "beech wood" and "oak wood" also came from trees, those trees grew in distant, unfamiliar woods he had never seen and were chopped down by lumberjacks and transported to the city in open freight trains.

Then one day Cutura said, "Hey, let's get some of that fruit!" He jumped over a bent spike between two slanting iron posts and stepped into the bushes. It was about noon and blazing hot, the sun casting its golden lances through the leaves into Cutura's long hair and acned face. Blam followed Cutura's lead cautiously, but caught a trouser leg on the spike. Looking for a place to leave his satchel and free his hands, he saw Cutura's books scattered on the ground in the sun (Cutura had no satchel). But out of habit Blam walked on until he found a shady spot under a tree for his satchel. Only then did he look to see where Cutura was. He found him hanging from the lowest branch of the tree, his open shirt revealing a muscular stomach indented at the belly button. All at once Cutura swung, planted his feet on the branch, and in no time had hoisted himself up. "Catch!" he shouted, throwing Blam three deep-red hawthorn berries still connected by stiff stems. Blam caught them but did not know what to do next, until he looked up and saw Cutura picking more and popping them into his mouth, chewing them, and spitting the tiny seeds out through his teeth. Blam decided to try one. The moment he bit into the berry, a warm, pulpy sweetness flooded his tongue and coated the roof of his mouth. It was like nothing he had ever tasted: it was like chewing spots of sun or a dusty leaf or the rust on the iron fence; it was like eating raw earth, dry and brittle, lying on the earth, burrowing into it. He kept taking fruit from Cutura, popping it into his mouth, chewing it, and spitting the seeds all over, stuffing more and more into his mouth until Cutura grew tired and sprang to the ground, lithe as a cat.

Translated from the Serbo-Croatian by Michael Henry Heim

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ANDREY PLATONOV

Chevengur

Old provincial towns have tumbledown outskirts, and people come straight from nature to live there. A man will turn up there, with a keen-eyed face that has been worn out to the point of sadness, a man who can fix up or equip anything but who has lived through his own life quite unequipped. There was not one object, from a frying pan to an alarm clock, that had not at sometime in its life passed through the hands of this man. Nor had he refused to resole shoes, to cast shot for wolf-hunting and to turn out counterfeit medals to be sold at old-time village fairs. But he had never made anything for himself—neither a family, nor a home. In summer he just lived outdoors, keeping his tools in a sack and using the sack as a pillow—less for softness than to keep the tools safe. He warded off the early sun by placing a burdock leaf over his eyes when he lay down in the evening. In winter he lived on what remained from his summer's earnings, paying the verger for his lodging by ringing the hours through the night. Nothing especially interested him—neither people, nor nature—apart from made objects of every kind. And so he treated people and fields with an indifferent tenderness, not infringing on their interests. During the winter evenings he would sometimes make things for which there was no need; he would make towers out of wire, ships from pieces of roofing iron, airships out of paper and glue, and so on—all entirely for his own pleasure. Often he would even delay someone's chance commission; he might, say, have been asked to re-hoop a cask, but he would be busy fashioning a wooden clock, thinking it should work without a spring—on account of the earth's rotation.

The verger disapproved of these unpaid activities. "You'll be begging in your old age, Zakhar Pavlovich! That cask's been standing there for days, and you just keep holding some piece of old wood to the ground—goodness knows what you're up to!"

Zakhar Pavlovich said nothing; to him the human word was like the sound of the forest to people who live there—something you don't hear. The verger went on calmly watching and smoking—from frequent attendance at services he had lost his faith in God, but he knew for sure that Zakhar Pavlovich was not going to get anywhere; people had been living in the world for a long time and they had already thought up everything. Zakhar Pavlovich, however, thought otherwise: there were still many things

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to be thought up, since there was still material in nature that lived untouched by human hands.

Every fifth year half the village would go off to the mines and the towns, and the other half to the forests—because of harvest failure. It has been known from time immemorial that herbs, greens, and cereals do well in forest clearings even in dry years. The half of the village that had stayed would rush out to these clearings—to save their vegetables from being plundered instantly by hordes of greedy wanderers. But this time there was a drought the following year too. The village bolted up its huts and set out onto the highway in two columns. One column set off to Kiev to beg, the other to Lugansk in search of seasonal work; a few people turned off into the forest and the overgrown gullies, where they took to eating raw grass, clay, and bark and lived wild. The people who left were nearly all adults—the children had either managed to die in advance or had run off to beg. As for the unweaned babies, the mothers who fed them had let them gradually die, not allowing them to suck their fill.

There was one old woman, Ignatyevna, who cured infants of hunger: she gave them an infusion of mushrooms mixed with sweet herbs, and the children fell peacefully silent with dry foam on their lips. The mother would kiss her child on its now aged, wizened forehead and whisper: "He's no longer suffering, the dear. Praise the Lord!"

Ignatyevna would be standing beside her. "He's passed away peacefully. Look at him lying there—he's happier now than when he was alive. He's in Heaven now, listening to the silver winds. . . ."

The mother would admire her child, believing its sad lot had been eased. "Take my old skirt, Ignatyevna, I've got nothing else to give you. Many thanks!"

Ignatyevna held the skirt up to the light and said: "You have a little cry, Mitrievna, it's what people do. But your skirt's in threads; you must throw in a little shawl too—or how about a nice iron?. . ."

Zakhar Pavlovich was left alone in the village—he got to like being there without people. But he spent most of the time in the forest, sharing a hut with an old loner and living on a brew of herbs whose uses the loner had studied beforehand.

Zakhar Pavlovich worked all the time, to forget his hunger, and he taught himself to make from wood everything he had previously made from metal. As for the loner—he had done nothing all his life, and now all the more so: until the age of fifty he had just looked around him, wondering what was what and waiting for something finally to emerge from the general turmoil, so he could start to act once the world had cleared up and calmed down; he was not in any way possessed by life and he had never taken a step either towards marriage with a wife or towards any generally

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useful activity. He had been surprised to be born and he had stayed surprised, with light blue eyes and a youthful face, until he was an old man. While Zakhar Pavlovich was making an oak frying-pan, the loner had said in astonishment that they would never be able to fry anything in it. But Zakhar Pavlovich poured water into the wooden frying-pan and got the water to boil over a slow flame without the frying-pan catching fire. The loner could not believe his eyes: "That's really something! But how, brother, does one ever get to know everything?"

These overwhelming universal mysteries caused the loner's arms to drop to his sides. Nobody had ever explained to him the simplicity of events—or else the loner was entirely muddle-headed. And when Zakhar Pavlovich tried to tell him what makes the wind blow rather than stand still, the loner was still more surprised and failed to understand anything, although he sensed the origin of the wind precisely.

"I don't believe it! Say that again! From the rays of the sun, you say? What a story! . . ."

Zakhar Pavlovich explained that the sun's rays were not a story, but simply heat.

"Heat?!" repeated the loner in surprise. "E-e-e-h, the witch!"

The loner's surprise merely shifted from one object to another, changing nothing in his consciousness. What kept him going was not his mind, but a sense of trustful respect.

By the end of the summer Zakhar Pavlovich had remade out of wood all the articles he knew of. The hut and the patch of ground attached to it were filled with the products of Zakhar Pavlovich's technical skills—a whole collection of agricultural tools, machines, instruments, devices, and everyday appliances, all entirely in wood. Strangely, there was not one object which repeated nature: a horse for example, or a pumpkin.

In August the loner went into the shade, lay down on his stomach and said, "Zakhar Pavlovich, I'm dying; yesterday I ate a lizard. . . .I brought you two little mushrooms, but I fried myself a lizard. Wave some burdock leaves over me—I like wind."

Zakhar Pavlovich waved a burdock leaf, brought some water, and gave some to the dying man. "You're not going to die. You just think you are."

"I will die, Zakhar Pavlovich, really and truly I will," said the loner, afraid to lie. "My insides don't hold anything; there's a huge worm living inside me; it's drunk up all my blood. . . ." The loner turned over onto his back. "What do you think—should I be afraid or not?"

"Don't be afraid," Zakhar Pavlovich answered positively. "I'd die straight away myself but, you know, when you're so busy working on things. . . ."

The loner was glad of this sympathy and died towards evening without fear. At the time of his death Zakhar Pavlovich had gone to bathe in

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the stream and he found the loner already dead, suffocated by his own green vomit. The vomit was compact and dry, it had settled into a paste around the loner's mouth, and white small-caliber worms were at work in it.

At night Zakhar Pavlovich woke up and listened to rain—the second rain since April. "That would have given the loner a surprise," he thought. But the loner was soaking alone in the torrents that poured evenly from the sky, and was quietly swelling up.

Through the sleepy, windless rain something sang out sadly, in a muffled voice, from so far away that there was probably no rain where it was singing, and it was probably day. Zakhar Pavlovich immediately forgot the loner, and the rain, and hunger, and got up. It was the whistle of a distant machine, a living, working steam engine. Zakhar Pavlovich went outside and stood in the damp of the warm rain that sang of a peaceful life, of the vastness of the long-lasting earth. The dark trees were dozing, squatting down, embraced by the caress of the calm rain; they felt so happy that it made them weak and they rustled their branches without the least wind.

Zakhar Pavlovich paid no attention to the joy of nature; what excited him was the unknown, now-silent engine. As he lay down to sleep again, he thought how even the rain was at work, while he just slept and hid away in the forest to no purpose: "The loner's died, and you'll die too. He never made one thing in all his life—all he ever did was size things up and try to fit in; he wondered at everything; he saw marvels in the simplest places and never turned his hand to anything in case he spoiled it; all he did was pick mushrooms and he didn't even know how to do that, and now he's dead, and he never harmed nature in any way."

In the morning there was a big sun and the forest sang with all the density of its voice, letting the morning wind pass beneath its underleaves. What Zakhar Pavlovich noticed was not so much morning as a change of shift: the rain had gone to sleep in the soil, the sun had taken its place, and now the wind had begun to fuss about because of the sun, the trees were dishevelled, grasses and bushes had begun to mutter and even the rain itself, without having had any rest, was getting back onto its feet again, aroused by the tickling warmth, and gathering its body into clouds.

Zakhar Pavlovich put his wooden objects into a sack—as many as would fit in it—and set off into the distance, along the women's mushroom path. He did not look at the loner: the dead are not appealing.

Translated from the Russian by Robert and Elizabeth Chandler

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ANDREY PLATONOV

The Seventh Man

A man crossed the front to our lines. At first he wept, then he looked round, ate some food, and calmed down.

The man was poorly dressed, in black rags tied to his torso with pieces of string, and his feet were wrapped in straw. There was little soft body left on him, no more than on the corpse of someone long dead: nothing had been preserved but bones, and his life still clung on around them. Dark blue had begun to cover his face, as if the hoar-frost of death had appeared there, and his face lacked any ordinary expression, and only after close scrutiny could one see that on it lay the sorrow of alienation from all people—a sorrow which this man, worn down with suffering, evidently no longer felt or else felt to be his normal condition.

He seemed to live only from habit and not from any desire, since everything he breathed, was nourished by, and believed in had been taken away from him and estranged. But he was still living and patiently wearing himself out, as if he wanted to fulfil to the end the will of his mother, who had borne him for a happy life, as if he were hoping she had not deceived him, that she had not borne him only for torment.

His soul—the last desire for life, refusing destruction until the final breath—had already emerged from the dried-up hiding-places of his body, and his face and empty eyes were therefore so little animated by any vital need as to have no meaning, and it was impossible to make out this man's character, his evil and good; yet he went on living.

His papers made out that he was Osip Yevseevich Gershanovich, a native and resident of the city of Minsk, born in the year 1894, and that he had worked previously as a senior planner in the Union of Provincial Light Industries; his life, however, had made him into another being, perhaps a holy martyr, a hero of humanity, perhaps a traitor to humanity in the impenetrable protective mask of a martyr. In our time, in time of war, when the enemy has decided to destroy restless, inconsistent humanity, sparing only a worn-out, servile remnant of it—in our time evil-doing can appear inspired and righteous, since violence has instilled evil inside man, squeezing out from there his old sacred essence, and man devotes himself to the cause of evil at first in despair, and then with faith and satisfaction, so as not to die of horror. Evil and good can now appear in an equally inspired, touching, and attractive form: in this lies the special condition of

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our time, formerly unknown and impossible; formerly a man might be capable of evil-doing but would feel this as his misfortune, and, escaping it, would once again press himself against the warm, accustomed gladness of life; now, however, man has been forcibly reduced to the capacity to live and warm himself by self-immolation, destroying himself and others.

Gershanovich reached us with the help of the partisans, who had been surprised and interested by so rare a man—rare even to them, who had known all fate had to offer—a man able to accommodate death within him self and endure it; they led him through the lines, protecting him with their own bodies, and carried him in their arms past fortified enemy positions, so that he should move away in his heart from suffering, even from the memory of it, and begin to live normally.

Gershanovich's speech was like the speech of a man in a dream, as if the main part of his consciousness were engaged in a world that was invisible to us and all that reached us was the weak light of his thoughts that had moved far away. He called himself the seventh man and said that he hadn't pulled the pin of the hand-grenade because the pin was stiff and there hadn't been time to pull it, and that the pin had been stiff because the work of the quality control department was not good enough, not like in his Province Artisans' Union in Minsk.

Then Gershanovich spoke to us more clearly, saying he used to take work home with him in the evening; he needed money because he had fathered five children and all five had grown up healthy, and they ate well, and he was glad they were eating up his labor and not leaving any over, and he had taught himself to sleep little, so as to have time to do extra work, but now he could sleep for a long time and he could even die—there was no one left for him to feed. All his children, and his wife and grandmother, were lying in a clay grave near the Borisov concentration camp, and an additional five hundred people lay there with them; they had been killed too—they were all naked, but they were covered over with earth. There would be grass in summer, and snow lying there in winter, and they would not feel cold there.

"They'll get warm now," said Gershanovich. "Soon I'll join them too; I'm lonely without my family; there's nowhere else for me to go; I want to visit their grave."

"Live with us," one of the soldiers invited him.

"Me live here, while they don't live there!" exclaimed Gershanovich. "They're in a bad way, it's very difficult for them—where's the justice in it? No, I'll try and get to them again through death. I didn't reach them the first time, now I'll try again."

And he suddenly shuddered from a dark memory: "And again I won't die. I'll kill, but I won't die myself."

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"How do you know? That's as may be," said the soldier who was listening to him.

"That's how it will be," said Gershanovich. "The Fascists are careful with death; they're tight-fisted, they make one death do for seven men—it was me who thought up that little saving for them—and now they'll try to make it go even further. The Germans have grown poor."

At the time we did not understand what Gershanovich meant. "Let him ramble on," we thought.

Soon afterwards four partisans got through to us. They turned out to have known Gershanovich for a long time, as a member of partisan brigade N, and they told us that Gershanovich was a very wise man and the most skilled partisan in his brigade. His family had indeed been shot near Borisov, five hundred souls had been shot at the same time, so there would be fewer mouths to feed and fewer Jews.

"And death hasn't taken him once, though he's ready enough," said one of the new partisans. "And one can understand why: Osip Yevseich is no fool, and he needs a death as smart as he is, but the fascists make a lot of noise when they fight, and they shoot like fools. They're no great danger. . . .In Minsk Osip Yevseich got a bullet in the head—and at close range—but it didn't get right inside; he stopped it with his mind."

We said this was not possible.

"It is," said the partisan. "It depends how you fight. If you're a skilled fighter, it's possible."

To prove this, he felt the back of Gershanovich's head with his fingers; then we felt the same place ourselves: beneath his hair lay a dent in the skull from a deep wound.

After he had lived with us a bit longer, and eaten some good food, Gershanovich became more rational and less strange-looking, and then he once again went far behind the enemy lines, together with four partisans. He wanted to pass a second time along the path where death had failed to conquer him, and where he himself had achieved only a partial victory, and then to return to us straight away.

Armed, and wearing a Belorussian coat and bast shoes, Gershanovich went off at night into the thick of the enemy, in order to destroy them and to visit his dead children.

After making his way to Minsk along partisan paths, Gershanovich left his companions and again, as on his first journey, came out into the outskirts of the town in the half-light. He walked alone in quiet consciousness, understanding the world around him as a sad fairy tale or as a dream that might pass him by forever. He was already used to the absence of people, to the deathly ruins behind the German lines and to

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the constant chill of a human body that keeps dragging itself along and living.

Gershanovich walked past the camp for Russian prisoners of war. There was no one to be seen now behind the wire fence. Then a Russian soldier got up in the distance and walked towards the fence. He had no hat and was wearing a charred greatcoat; one foot was bare, the other wrapped in a rag, and he was walking through snow. As he moved on his emaciated, difficult legs, he muttered something in delirium, the words of his eternal separation from life; then he collapsed onto his hands and lay there face down.

There were a lot of people by the entrance to the camp. "It was just as crowded then," Gershanovich remembered. "There are always people here."

On a bench, beside the sentry box, sat two fascists, senior Gestapo security officers. They were silently smoking pipes and smiling at what they saw before them.

Two Russian prisoners in proper military uniforms and with well-fed faces were chasing two other people out of the camp, also Russian prisoners, but so frail, wasted, and apathetic that they seemed already to have died, to be dragging themselves forward with a strength that was not theirs.

The fascists said something to the Russians, and the two decently uniformed ones gave a push to their two comrades, who submissively fell down, since their weakness made them helpless. Then the two well-nourished Russians forcibly lifted up the enfeebled ones and threw them against the ground. After this the well-fed Russians stopped expectantly, wanting to rest. The Germans shouted out that they must go on working until the last breath of life had left the weak and useless ones. The well-fed traitors obediently picked up the exhausted soldiers and again flung them down, smashing their heads against frozen hummocks of earth.

The fascists began to laugh and ordered them to work faster. Gershanovich stood at a distance and watched; he understood that this murder was taking place in order to economize on cartridges, with which the Germans in the rear were extremely sparing, and that the fascists found it necessary, moreover, to make murder into something instructive and edifying for the prisoners who were still alive.

Five prisoners walked up to the gates from inside the camp and watched silently as their comrades were tortured to death. The Germans did not chase them away; they watched the Russians with a smile of accustomed, almost indifferent hatred, ordering the traitors to work more slowly now. But by then there was no more point in their work: what they picked up from the ground and threw down again against the hummocks were mere corpses with battered heads and blood that had gone cold and

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congealed. The men must have died from inner exhaustion when they were smashed against the ground for the first time; there was nothing left in them for their breath to hold on to. The fascists, however, continued this execution of corpses, wishing its educational meaning to be brought out to the maximum benefit of the living.

Gershanovich quietly made his way toward the Germans who were sitting on the bench. The now-exhausted traitors also went up to them and, standing at attention, requested the additional food rations to which their services entitled them.

The Germans said nothing and grinned; then one of them answered that there would be no more extra rations: partisans had attacked a supply convoy and they first had to get the bread back from them. "Go and join our punitive corps," said the Germans, "and get the bread back from the partisans; then you'll have enough to eat. There's no bread for you here."

Beneath the skirt of his coat Gershanovich pulled the pin of a grenade and from close range, accurately, hurled the grenade into the middle of the four enemies.

The grenade burst furiously into flame, as if screaming out with a human being's last voice, and the enemies of mankind, after going utterly still for a moment, fell to the ground.

Last time, at the other entrance to this same camp, Gershanovich's grenade had not gone off; he had merely smashed in the head of one enemy with it, as if with a dead piece of metal, but this time he felt glad and he ran off with a satisfied soul.

The sentry in the hut, however, remained alive; he began to shoot at Gershanovich and into the air.

Five armed guards appeared from a pavilion where refreshing drinks had once been sold and, with a lot of noise, shouting at one another so as not to feel afraid themselves, fell on Gershanovich and disarmed him.

Osip Gershanovich was taken to the district commandant's headquarters, where he had already been once before. Down in the cellar men were shot in groups of six—one bullet to each group; it was imperative to save ammunition. The Germans stood the men close behind one another, equalizing their heights by placing thick volumes—somebody or other's collected works—beneath the feet of the shorter men.

Gershanovich was asked at the commandant's whether he was going to say anything in order to stay alive. He answered that, on the contrary, he was going to say nothing, since he wished to die, and that there was no point in beating him up, not because this was wrong, but because it would waste the strength of the field police; better to leave intact inside them the mutton and noodles they ate at the state's expense.

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Perhaps thinking there was sense in what he had said, the officer ordered Gershanovich to be taken away. But, until he was dead, Gershanovich lived, and struggled, and hoped to be the victor.

This officer was not the one who had interrogated Gershanovich the first time, and so Gershanovich once again proposed his innovation: one bullet could be used to kill not six men, but seven; the seventh would die later, not straight away, but he would die all the same, and to the state this would represent a savings of 14 percent on ammunition.

"The seventh doesn't die," said the officer. "The penetrative force of the bullet is already significantly weaker by the sixth head. It has been reported to me that on a previous occasion they tried adding a seventh man. He survived, and escaped from an unfilled grave, wounded in the back of the head."

"He was a survivor," Gershanovich explained. "He knew what was what, but his head still hurt; it had been damaged. And that's the truth!"

"Who was it?" asked the officer.

"How would I know? Could have been anyone. There lived a man—he didn't live long; they tried to kill him; he lived again and died anyway; he missed his family. . . ."

The officer thought for a moment: "We're trying out a new type of modernized musket. You can be the seventh man, but for the experiment I'll put an eighth there as well."

"By all means!" Gershanovich quickly agreed.

"It'll be interesting to see," said the officer, "whether the bullet lodges in your brain or if it goes out through your forehead and into the eighth man. These muskets keep up a fierce rate of fire, but we don't know their penetrative force."

"That will be interesting. You and I will soon find out," said Gershanovich, and thought what a fool the officer was. A guard then took the prisoner away.

In the common cell, inhabited by the deceased-to-be, life went on as usual: people were mending clothes, chatting, sleeping, and thinking about the way life was and the way it ought to be according to universal justice. The cell had no windows; the small paraffin lamp burned all day and all night. Only a newly arrived prisoner could say what time it was, but soon they all forgot the time again, and argued about it, and nobody knew for sure whether it was day or night in the world, though this was a matter that interested them all.

Gershanovich found himself a place on the floor and lay down to rest. A thought was now troubling him: who would be the eighth man when they were shot? This eighth man was guaranteed a sure salvation, as long

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as he didn't turn out to be a coward or a fool. "That's bad," thought Gershanovich. "If it kills me, the bullet won't hit him with much force; it might damage the bone, nothing more—but he'll think he's been killed, and he'll die from fright and consciousness."

Some time passed. Gershanovich had not yet got any sleep, but the whole cell was ordered outside. Gershanovich was expecting this; he knew from the first time that those designated to die were not kept long, so the Germans would not have to give them food or water, so they would not have to think about them at all and expend their minds to no purpose.

For the second time in his life Gershanovich was going down the dark stone steps to a death in the cellar. Among his comrades, men who were going with him to destruction, he did not recognize one familiar face, and from their speech he guessed that these people had recently been brought from Poland.

A lance-corporal counted off eight men, including Gershanovich, who was the second in line, and left the rest on the staircase.

The cellar was lit by the timid light of a solitary candle, and near the light stood the officer who had interrogated Gershanovich. The officer, a lover of firearms, was inspecting some sort of short-barelled rifle. "They're always scrimping and saving," thought Gershanovich. "But we mustn't. If it takes two bullets to kill each German; it'll still be more than worth it!"

The lance-corporal began arranging the prisoners so the backs of their heads were in line.

"I'm the seventh," Gershanovich reminded him in good time.

"You don't want to be the first to die?" asked the lance-corporal. "Want to outsmart us, do you? Be the seventh to die then, as a privilege, but put a brick under your feet, you're not tall enough."

Gershanovich put a brick under his feet and got up onto his place of death. He looked at the eighth and last prisoner: in front of him was the bald patch of an old man, covered with the down of infancy.

"It's going to be death," Osip Gershanovich understood. "But what of it? I've not had a bad life here. If I end up in the next world, I'll get by as best I can there, and things will be all right, and I'll see my children. But if there's nothing there, that means I'll be like my dead children, the same as them, and that too will be fair and just. Why am I living when my heart's been killed and it's lying in the earth?"

"Ready?" asked the officer. "Breathe deeply!" he ordered, and then promised the prisoners: "Now you'll each sleep the sweet sleep of a child!"

Gershanovich did the opposite. He stopped breathing and listened to the silence that had set in, wanting to hear the shot for his own amusement, but he did not hear it and fell at once into sweet sleep: his kind

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mind had lost consciousness of its own accord, protecting the man from despair.

On waking, Gershanovich tried his forehead: it was smooth and clean. "The bullet's inside my mind," he decided. Then he tried the back of his head and felt there only the old dent of his previous injury. "I'm still alive, I'm in this world; it's like I thought," the prisoner reflected. "This new gun of theirs is no use at all: the cartridges don't have enough powder; I knew it. So how many have they killed with one bullet? Three or four, probably, but last time the bullet killed the sixth man and got as far as me. The enemy of mankind is growing weak, he's growing weak—I can feel it!"

As he lay there, Gershanovich became used to the dark, which was still illuminated by a mysterious, scarcely breathing light that trembled in the distance. Near him lay the man who had stood in front of him, the bald old man with child-like down on the clean skin of his head. Gershanovich put his hand to the head of the old man; his head had grown cold and the whole man had died, even though he had not been harmed in any way. "Just what I thought—one mustn't be afraid," thought Gershanovich. "The world itself could come to an end from fear, and then what would there be? One mustn't be afraid."

He worked out where he was; this was the cellar where they had been shot, eight of them, and the candle in the distance had still not burnt down. "It's a shame we're in here," thought Gershanovich. "It's going to be death. But what of it? Before death there's also a little life. Last time they carted me off to a grave, and that didn't stop me living."

An officer bent down towards him. Gershanovich sensed him from his foreign breath—a stinking foulness carried out from his innards.

"So what is it you Bolsheviks say?" said the officer. "Didn't work out?! Wanted to live did the Jew, standing seventh in the queue!"

"I'd say it's your idea that didn't work out," answered Gershanovich. "I'm alive!"

"You're dead now!" stated the officer, aiming the barrel of his small personal revolver at Gershanovich's forehead.

Gershanovich looked into the officer's pale eyes, which had been deadened by a secret despair, and said to him, "Fire at me. . . .My life is here, but my children are there—I'll be all right wherever I am. We were people here—we were humanity—but there we'll be something higher still: we'll be eternal nature, giving birth to people."

The bullet entered one of Gershanovich's eyes, and he went still; but for a long time his body remained warm, slowly taking leave of life as it returned its warmth to the earth.

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Long afterwards an elderly partisan came across the front to our lines and recounted the story of Gershanovich's end. He had been the eighth, the last in the queue of prisoners sentenced to death, and Gershanovich had stood behind him. So well had he managed to feign death and attenuate his breathing that his body had even gone cold, which was how, for the sake of life, he had deceived the German officer and had even fooled Gershanovich when the latter had tried the back of his head.

The candle in the cellar had gone out—they had not bothered to light another—and this old man, without any proper verification of his death, had been carted off and thrown into a gully together with the truly deceased, and from there he had slipped away. To save manpower, the fascists do not always dig graves, especially in winter—when the ground is frozen.

Translated from the Russian by Robert and Elizabeth Chandler and Angela Livingstone

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CORINNA

Memorial Day

I get to the bus-stop on Haifa Road at nine twenty in the morning. I ask, "Who's a veteran here at the bus-stop?" A young soldier smiles and says,

"Which bus do you need? To Nazareth? Just passed."

On the bench sits an elderly man, wearing an "Egged" cap. In a Russian accent, he explains he only records number 502. "But," searched in his bag, "Maybe. Yes. Got it. Got luck! Got table! Bus leaves Central Station—nine o'clock, ten. . . ."

The soldier took the timetable from him. Polished lieutenant's insignia, beret on his shoulder, a white undershirt peeping through the opening of his snow-white shirt. He says, "You have a meeting at twelve-thirty? You'll make it."

He lifts his arm to stop a bus with a sign, 'to the military cemetery,' and runs, and hops on with a nimble jump.

Buses stop on their way to Netania, Ra'anana, Tiberias.

The elderly man makes notes on his report sheet.

A soldier in blue trousers, a captain, walks by, signals to another passing bus, again with the sign 'to the military cemetery,' runs and gets on with the same agile movement.

At nine-thirty number 820 arrives.

To Afula.

"You can continue to wherever you want, yes," says the driver. Upright and robust, he smiles between neatly shaved cheeks: "How can I tell you when we'll be there. You go out in the morning and you don't know what mishaps might happen on the way, a traffic jam, roadwork, an accident. Who can know in advance? If I tell you a time, what good will it do? What good will it do.

What do you mean, 'It will help to be reassured'?

Oh, not to worry! You mean, to be optimistic? I'm with you!"

On a seat nearby a fair-haired woman-girl is breast-feeding a large baby. The flower-patterned T-shirt covers her breast. The baby's head detaches and the mother enfolds the baby in her arms, turning to search her bag. The woman next to her spreads her feeble-fleshed arms:

"Let me hold him for a bit. You don't want to come to me? You're already afraid of strangers? There are many bad people in the world, yes."

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The mother hugs the baby and nods, her eyes fierce, "That's another thing I will teach him!"

You sit down behind the broad shoulders which look good in the light blue shirt, thinking with your eyes open about the possibility of cuddling up between him and the steering wheel, and you take out of your bag a book which opens with words by Anna Akhmatova:

But the future, as we know, casts its shadow long before it enters, and it knocked on the window,

when a female soldier comes up from the rear seats:

"Can you turn up the volume?"

Immediately the radio whistles,

This is Kol Israel, the voice of Israel. The ten o'clock news. At the Central Bus Station in Hadera at nine-forty a terrorist bombing at least two people killed twenty injured at the central bus station in Hadera at nine-forty in bus number 820 which was on its way from Tel Aviv to Afula, and more attacks are expected, the police are warning the public.

Hey, you are riding at this very moment on the number 820 bus from Tel Aviv to Afula.

Under the seat there is no foreign object. The aisle is clear.

Your body woke up at quarter to eight this morning, as you had ordered it: this morning I will get up at quarter to eight. You don't believe in alarm clocks. Electronic devices will not manage your life for you.

And at quarter to eight in the morning you said,

I won't go

I won't go

this is a disaster-prone day

because in your dream you were being pushed from one place to the other.

And one hour later, at quarter to nine, you got up and left.

The bus turns right.

"Hadera"?

Someone answers, "Yes," and here is a town, country houses and wide boulevards, between which the driver turns the steering wheel like a horse smelling his stable, until he is blocked inside an intersection, and he opens the door:

"I can't go into the station?"

The policewoman answers him in a sharp, high-pitched voice, "No! No! It's a slaughter in there! A slaughter!!! Drive on! Drive on! Be careful! There's going to be two more bombs, it's been announced!"

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The driver lingers on for a second. At the far end of the street stand, with their necks stretched, hundreds of people whose heads are turned toward an invisible spot. He turns the wheel without a sound, driving slowly, as if only now, as he is diverted from his course, the barriers of optimism are dissipating.

"A slaughter. . ." the passengers repeat to each other in a compassionate, bewildered voice.

The day before, at a café, a thin man came from a distant table, touched the device above your table, and after the pictures appeared on the screen, asked, "It's not bothering you?"

"It does bother me! I threw the television out of my house twelve years ago!"

"What do you mean you threw the television out, you want to detach yourself from reality, to shut yourself up, not to know about the world, about anything? This is the Journalists' House here."

"I want to know reality without any mediators."

"You can't know everything on your own!"

He looked above his white mustache into the inside of your plate, and said, "Can you eat only eggplants all the time?"

"I can't climb the Everest either."

"I'm not interested in climbing the Everest. How can you be without television? I come home I have to watch the news every day. I want to know what's going on in the world. You're running away from reality. If you saw over there in the courtyard," he pointed at the lawn resting sleepy in the sun, "If you saw two people fighting over there, you wouldn't go and watch?"

"I wouldn't go and watch—I would go and break it up. I am not a spectator, and without the television I have much more time to do things."

The man said in a sarcastic voice, "Well bravo to you, but you would go and watch, wouldn't you? No?"

"I'm not interested in seeing. I'm interested in doing."

The man cried, "What do I have to do?" and you said, "What's your dream?"

"It's not my dream to climb the Everest. It's very boring to climb the Everest, just snow and whiteness. I enjoy watching nature movies in color on television, about places I will never go to."

And you said, "Why wouldn't you go there?"

"Because I wouldn't have the time!" he cried, exasperated, and pointed at the people sitting by a distant table: "Do you see the man over there in a stripy shirt with his back to us, an important man, a Nobel Prize nominee, professor Rechav'am Israeli. If you watched television, you would know!"

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You dug into your eggplant slices in silence and when the man went away to the distant table, you saw him putting his hand on the shoulder of the professor, who turned to him and said, "Gentlemen, this is Eitan Nachshon from the Palmach! Eitan Nachshon, listen to this!"

The radio on the bus whistles, *Kol Israel from Jerusalem, it is eleven o'clock.* The driver stops. They call the shriek of the siren a moment of silence. You have never gotten up to stand so eagerly in your life, leaning your forehead on the dividing bar between you and the driver. *Enough Enough Enough I'm sick of it.*

Without a sound, so as not to violate the seeming silence,

until the siren calms down.

Through the bus window women and men on the sides of the road get into their vehicles like figures in a silent movie, and the voice of the newscaster is heard as the bus passes by them,

The bombing in Hadera was on number 820 which was on its way not from Tel Aviv to Afula but from Afula to Tel Aviv. Five people killed, twenty-five wounded. "The bus stopped to take some passengers at Oum El Fakhem," cries a woman into the microphone on the radio, and the reporter asks, *"How do you know that? Were you on the bus?" And the woman says, "I wasn't, but this woman here next to me, she doesn't want to be identified, she was."*

The reporter says, "Let's not be swept by rumors."

A passenger on the seat next to you says in a slow voice, "Must have got on in Oum El Fakhem." The bus drives by the sign announcing the village. The road is overlooked by a house painted in red in the middle, adorned with arches all along its three floors.

You turn to the man.

"Why do you say such a horrible thing?! In Oum El Fakhem, they are Israeli citizens; they are not terrorists."

The bus enters Afula. A voice on the radio says,

The terrorist got off the bus through the back door at the station in Hadera and before he got off he left an explosive device on the stairs. . . .

The driver lifts up a shocked face, smiles sadly at hearing the "Drive-in-peace-and-return-in-peace" slogan, and says, "There's your bus arriving over there. On platform eight."

On platform eight two elderly women in outfits adorned with embroidery, hurrying each other in Amhari, climb with their bags onto the bus.

A thin policeman says with surprise, "This bus always goes into Nazareth. I don't understand why it's not going in, There'll be another one soon, You'll be there on time, it's only a half-hour ride. Where are you from? I've also just come on the 820 from Tel Aviv. No, not on your bus.

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We left the central bus station, I think it was eight-thirty, no, quarter to eight, I think. I didn't have the patience to wait for the express bus.

We were held up in Hadera, because of the bombing.

You're right, the station here is miserable-looking. Even the station in Nablus is not like that."

On the right-hand pocket of his blue shirt he has his name engraved in metal letters, Said Khamid.

He says,

"In our town Shfar'am it's the best, Moslem and Christian Israeli citizens, living together in peace; there are no problems. They tell me in the territories, 'How can you be a Moslem and not be ashamed?' I'm not ashamed; this is my job, to serve the country. I've been in the police for seventeen years now. When I was still a boy I wanted to be a policeman, like my uncles. . . ."

Two military jeeps stop with a screech in front of the platform. A soldier hops out of the first jeep:

"Whose package is this?

Yours?

Keep an eye on it.

And whose is this bag? Guys! Check every button! And every pen and everything! Open your eyes, each person should do their job, every button, pen, check it! Whoever seems like he should be checked, check him! Yes, you over there, come here!" He raises his voice to a youth in a faded flower-patterned shirt and greenish trousers, who looks at him with an empty stare when they lead him to be checked.

And the jeep with its soldiers drives off to call out warning calls at the neighboring platform.

The policeman Said Khamid nods.

"He's right; I agree with him. You have to check everything carefully, even a pen, everyone. I don't trust any Arab anymore. I don't trust any Arab."

A young woman on the bus leaving Afula toward Nazareth, on the adjacent seat, points with her chin: "Here, that's where the bombing was!"

You say,

"What bombing? Oh, long ago."

She combs a black curl, looking at you with surprise: "What 'long ago'?! Last week!"

On the street, demonstrators carrying large red signs are standing beside a commemorative pile of stones.

The woman collects her black plait, talking with pins in her mouth:

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"Believe me, if I didn't have to go home, I wouldn't go anywhere today."

On the radio there is a debate between Knesset members who are tugging at the truth like at a blanket that is too short to cover everybody's feet; each one finds in the event proof for the justice of his deeds and his way, while the bus comes to the intersection between Arab Nazareth and Jewish Upper-Nazareth.

A woman on your left, with crumpled face and clothes, points at the traffic of people and cars on the street along which the bus is slowly advancing, and says in a thick accent:

"Not good enter Nazareth. All Arabs."

You say,

You have no shame.

Over there they called you *Jidovska* and now here you're doing the same thing.

You're hysterical.

A young man in the seat behind you cuts the silence with an articulate accent: "It's not right. You always have to go into Nazareth and the bus always goes around and around. Full of Arabs."

He is heard by the five-year-old boy sitting on his knees. Like the name of the young driver, Abu Suleiman, written on the side of the coin-box—that's how things become engraved.

The driver says,

"Who here has to go to the spring? No one? So maybe you can get off here. Look at this traffic jam. It will take an hour. You'll get there faster on foot. If no one has to go to the spring, I don't have to go into Nazareth."

The policeman Said Khamid also gets off the bus. You say goodbye to him on the street as you descend right into a group of German, Dutch, and French speaking pilgrims—they are flushed and their faces are shining like the faces of the pita-in-herbs vendor at the bakery, the orange juice vendor at the grocery store, the pupils coming back from school who are showing you a shortcut to City Hall.

In the waiting room of the mayor's office it is very quiet. The day's newspapers are arranged on the secretary's desk. It's Independence Day and in the festive poetry sections it's written,

"In the darkness of life Love has come,
A certain barrier before the violence
Around and within. . . ."

A lone, lamenting poem, "I look at her small feet and ask/ How can one stand on them in the world."

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The mayor comes in from his room, "Troubled days! Troubled days!" He shakes your hand, wringing his hands, "A friend of mine died today, we were like brothers." He brings the pointing fingers of both his hands closer, joins them together. "And another very close friend died today. Two in one day," he comes out of one conversation and another on the phone, dialing from small pieces of paper, an attendant comes in with cups of coffee, a clerk enters and hands the city secretary, with an attentive bending of her head, a document condemning terrorism in which he marks down his corrections. She exits; the city secretary exits; the mayor says, "Soon we'll start the meeting," and turns to leave.

You say,

"Where is your honored deputy, he's not participating in the meeting? It's important that he does."

The mayor is at the door, explaining, "Some men have just come to see him."

"Women are more important than men," you say, and he with a big "Ahah!" smiles, exits. Alone in an empty room you write down, "I came all the way from Tel Aviv and if I had been for example Rabin or the last of the men, they wouldn't have expected any understanding from me and my time would have been respected. Remember please how this morning you got up at seven-thirty in the morning and said, 'I don't want to go nothing will come out of it nothing nothing nothing a waste of another day without writing. . . .'"

The room is full.

Asking, as usual, "How much time do we have?"

The mayor replies not as usual, in a soft voice, "However much is needed. However much is needed."

"Who was it who said on the radio, on the bus, maybe the president, yes, the president, that we must do things which spread peace, and this project is like that," you say, and the mayor, who two months later is killed in a car accident, says, "I'm dying to have such a project in this city. We have to check the budget and the location. The location is a problem because they requisitioned our lands when they built Upper Nazareth. We have in the entire city two thousand acres; now they're adding more and we're going to have three thousand acres, which is very little for a city with sixty thousand residents, through which every year nine hundred thousand tourists are passing, only passing through! Because we have less than five hundred hotel rooms."

"I write stories as well, not only poems, but there's no time, no time to write," he sighs and turns to answer another phone call, talks to his aides, tells you, "Now we'll go and fill up our bellies. We'll go to a restaurant,"

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and drives the car by himself. His deputy with the young mustache sits in the back seat.

He gets out of the car and talks with the gas station employee. He talks at length with the owner of the restaurant, with the cook, with the diners at a neighboring table.

"Eat Anna, eat. A wonderful fresh vegetable salad, and these fish, that's the best kind—Barbunia.

Listen, my father was a simple peasant, he had one hundred and six acres of farm land; they requisitioned them from us," and immediately his young deputy becomes attentive, as if restraining a sigh. "They requisitioned them from us when they built Upper Nazareth. We lived five sons and four daughters and dad and mom in one room and a half, a simple family. What family tree, who had the mind for that? But dad had a notebook, and he used to write everything in it, with dates, every event, even when he went to the hospital, three months before he died, at the age of eighty-nine, he asked me to bring him the notebook.

You're right, it's a treasure. I have to find this notebook and do something with it. Not the children, me! What do you think, that I intend to be mayor all my life?"

A woman holding a pen and a notebook directs the television cameraman to shoot the passengers getting on—an elderly couple, a girl with curly hair, a chubby man wearing a *kippah,* a *yarmulke.*

"Get on, get on," the driver hurries them, "The 'express' is only in half an hour. The roads are empty, we'll get there fast."

The television camera shoots the bus leaving and driving into the distance, and on the radio they are playing songs for the homeland, and the bus passes through a green country; tiled-roofs appear in Oum El Fakhem, and in an intersection stand two young men, about eighteen years old.

"The 'express' is in half an hour; I'm the 'local'," the driver answers the young *kibbutznik,* "What difference does it make, are you going to wait half an hour to save a quarter of an hour? Get on."

And the young man gets on.

After him comes the other, full eyes, worn-out trousers, a cheap flower-patterned shirt.

He carries in front of him a faded green cloth bag, a solid erect cylinder coming closer in the aisle, facing you arabesque letters.

And he sits down behind the man with the *kippah,* near the exit door, laying the barrel of his bag on the seat beside him.

The newscaster announces on the radio that the public must be alert.

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The driver talks to a girl in the seat to his right, "Honestly, too bad you're not fifteen years older. I tell my wife all the time that she should leave me, and she doesn't want to."

The girl answers, "You must have a wonderful wife."

"Sure she's wonderful, I just don't know what she sees in me, why she doesn't leave me."

In the driver's mirror you see a dark young man sitting with his head upright and his face gloomy, turned toward the landscape.

The driver says, "No, I can't, it will only create a turmoil, If I check every person, when will I have the time to drive? It's not my job, I'm not allowed to, only the security people are allowed, you saw that he was actually waiting for the 'express' bus, he didn't even want to get on. You have nothing to be afraid of!"

"I'm not afraid of him," you reply in a low voice, close to the driver's head, "The bag worries me. He actually has kind eyes."

"You see, you yourself say he's nice."

"Do they know already who did the bombing in Hadera?"

"A suicide-bomber. Don't worry, come sit here beside me. I'm looking at him in the mirror, OK? Have I made you feel better?"

"If you tell me that a suicide-bomber did the attack in Hadera, of course you make me feel better."

The driver laughs,

"What can I do?"

And an elderly couple in the seat behind him say loudly, "You shouldn't be afraid, if we're afraid where will we be?!"

You put your bag on your bosom, a large leather bag full of books and papers, cover your chest, but the head, what about the head? You roll down, lower your seat, and the bus enters the Central Station in Hadera, and you get up and come up to the driver, whispering:

"Now you can call a security man."

"OK, in a minute," he answers, and gets up, calling in a loud voice, "Come with me to check him. Come on, so you feel secure."

You grimace, shake your head, entrenched in your seat.

The driver walks up to the young man, and says in a voice which is heard from one end of the bus to the other, "I'm telling them that you are riding with me every day, and they don't want to believe me. What do you have in your bag? Ibrahim? OK, Ibrahim, take care."

He returns to you with a broad smile.

"Well, are you calm now?"

A man gets on the bus, sits down beside you. Will protect you with his body.

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On the radio, inside the vehicle making its way on the empty roads in the darkening evening, they present heroic stories from the War of Liberation.

We were sitting in the presidio and across from us were the Egyptian soldiers. In the bombardment the cabins had been burnt and we were left with nothing, not even shoes. I remember that they asked us what we needed, and we said—we don't need anything, but maybe a few pairs of shoes won't hurt, if possible. We were so modest in our demands and made do with so little.

Whose familiar voice is this?

We've just heard a conversation with lieutenant-colonel Eitan Nachshon! Lieutenant-colonel Eitan Nachshon, thank you! says the broadcaster, and the driver says again to the girl,

"My wife doesn't want to leave me. I don't understand why she doesn't want to leave me. I tell her, and she refuses."

"I don't understand why she refuses either!" You hear your voice suddenly, loud and measured.

The girl, and the elderly couple, and the man beside you—all start laughing,

and Ibrahim's solemn face stares at the light turning on in the windows beside the road

Translated from the Hebrew by Michal Sapir

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LOUIS A. SASS

Surface and Depth: Wittgenstein's Reflections on Psychoanalysis

> To learn from Freud you have to be critical; and psychoanalysis generally prevents this.
>
> Ludwig Wittgenstein

Ludwig Wittgenstein was of two minds about psychoanalysis, as he was about many things. Though generally dubious about the worth of psychology, Wittgenstein made an exception for Freud, whom he considered one of the few authors truly worth reading: "Here at last is a psychologist who has something to say." In the 1940s he went so far as to speak of himself as a "disciple" and "follower" of Freud. Yet, all the while, Wittgenstein remained sharply critical of Freud's way of thinking, and concerned about the harmful cultural effects psychoanalysis was likely to have. Freud he considered more clever than wise, a man of formidable intelligence and imagination but also of "colossal prejudice," "a prejudice which is very likely to mislead people."

Whereas Freud was always emphasizing the resistance to his theories about sexuality and the unconscious, Wittgenstein was far more impressed with the meretricious attraction such ideas are likely to have: involving the "charm" of the forbidden and of discovering things hidden, as in an underworld or secret cellar; the mythic appeal of seeing present events as repetitions of "something that happened long ago"; and the attraction of debunkingly reductionistic explanations which say that "this is really only this." Wittgenstein was willing to acknowledge the pervasiveness of sexual motives, and our powerful need to hide them from ourselves, but he was also acutely aware of the potential for banalization inherent in psychoanalytic accounts. "Freud's fanciful pseudo-explanations (precisely because they are brilliant) perform a disservice," he wrote in 1946. "Now any ass has these pictures available to use in 'explaining' symptoms of illness." He considered the seductiveness of Freud's style of thought to be extremely dangerous. Though potentially a way of enriching human existence, psychoanalysis had too often proven itself an enemy of the two things Wittgenstein held most dear: clarity of understanding and a sense of awe about the world.

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Wittgenstein (1889-1951) was certainly well positioned to witness the onset of the psychoanalytic era. Although he apparently did not read Freud before 1920, he came from a Viennese milieu steeped in psychoanalytic ideas, where interpreting dreams quickly became a sort of parlor game. His sister Margarete was an early defender of psychoanalysis who knew Freud well and had herself been analyzed by him, largely for reasons of "speculative curiosity." Though Wittgenstein never wrote a sustained treatise on psychoanalysis, he would not infrequently allude to it in his philosophical writings and more personal notes, sometimes as a model for escaping false analogies and other kinds of philosophical error, but more often as an example *of* such error. In a recently translated book, *Wittgenstein Reads Freud: The Myth of the Unconscious*, a French philosopher, Jacques Bouveresse, brings together and discusses virtually all of Wittgenstein's remarks on Freud and psychoanalysis, setting these in the context of more recent philosophical treatments of psychoanalysis by Wittgensteinians and other philosophers and theorists including Frank Cioffi, Brian McGuinness, Karl Popper, Adolf Grünbaum, Sebastiano Timpanaro, and David Archard. Here I want to address the intriguing relationship between Wittgenstein and Freud, a task much facilitated by Bouveresse's useful book, and in the course of doing so to comment from time to time on Bouveresse's approach.

The original title of Bouveresse's book is *Philosophie, Mythologie, et Pseudo-Science*; the work offers a convincing discussion of how, in Wittgenstein's view, psychoanalysis exemplifies each of these three (rather dubious) modes of human understanding. Like (metaphysical) philosophy, like pseudo-science, and like mythology, psychoanalysis, according to Wittgenstein, is not so much a mode of discovery as of *persuasion*—far less a matter of uncovering new facts than of seducing us into seeing or representing the world in a new way. Though turgidly written in parts (perhaps the translation is at fault), and in some respects unbalanced, Bouveresse's book is nevertheless a project of singular importance. It provides the first comprehensive overview of how our century's most brilliant philosopher (or antiphilosopher) reacted to the writings of its most influential psychologist.

Arguments around psychoanalysis have been sharply, sometimes absurdly, polarized in recent years. Wittgenstein's comments on Freud, though casual and themselves unbalanced on occasion, nevertheless point the way toward a more complicated as well as more healthy relationship to Freud and his legacy, one in which we can overcome our subservience without losing our appreciation, and in which we can better understand the rhetorical sources of Freud's (at times) mesmerizing power. Bouveresse is a helpful and generally reliable guide. But he does not leave the reader

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with enough understanding of how Wittgenstein could have considered himself to be, in any sense, a disciple or a follower of Freud. Bouveresse fails to register the degree to which the acuity of Wittgenstein's critique stems from his recognition of affinities between his own and Freud's thinking, affinities that make him all the more sensitive to certain errors to which Freud too easily succumbs.

Perhaps the most obvious and pervasive feature of Freud's approach that offended Wittgenstein was his predilection for grand generalization. Bouveresse remarks on the interesting contrast between the caution and reticence of Freud's early collaborator, Josef Breuer, and Freud's own interpretive boldness and explanatory zeal. Whereas Breuer was reluctant to fix on single explanations, preferring a more modest eclecticism, Freud seemed drawn like a sleepwalker toward sweeping generalizations and the assertion of single underlying essences. Thus he insisted on the fundamentally wish-fulfilling nature of all (or virtually all) dreams and the unconscious sexual meaning of all hysterical symptoms, on the way jokes always allow covert expression of repressed wishes, and (I would add) on the primitive or regressive nature of all psychopathological conditions. A telling passage from Freud's *An Autobiographical Study* brings this cast of mind out very clearly: "The state of things he [Breuer] had brought to light seemed to me so fundamental that I could not believe it would be absent in any case of hysteria, once it had been demonstrated in a single case."

But why, Wittgenstein would ask, should such an assumption be made? Why assume that what may be obvious, salient, or central in one case is necessarily true of all cases of what we may term "hysteria"? Hysteria, after all, might well be an instance of what Wittgenstein famously termed a "family-resemblance concept"—a loose grouping of individuals, each characterized by one or another of a set of overlapping features or similarities, no one of which pervades them all. And why should dreams, or jokes, always have a single motivation, or always serve a single purpose?

Wittgenstein, by contrast with Freud, was above all a critic of what he termed the "craving for generality" and its accompaniment, "the contemptuous attitude towards the particular case," which he considered perhaps the most important source not only of pseudo-science but also of much philosophical error and illusion. He was fond of the adage, "Everything is what it is and not another thing," and once thought of using as a motto for his book a line he recalled (inaccurately) from *King Lear:* "I'll teach you differences." In a passage alluding to Freud's dynamic theory of dreams, Wittgenstein describes how this contempt for particulars comes about, suggesting its link with a focus on hidden essences:

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> We now have a *theory*. . .but it does not present itself to us as a theory. For it is the characteristic thing about such a theory that it looks at a special clearly intuitive case and says *"That* shows how things are in every case; this case is the exemplar of *all* cases." "Of course! It has to be like that" we say, and are satisfied. We have arrived at a form of expression that *strikes us as obvious*. But it is as if we had now seen something lying *beneath* the surface.

Although Wittgenstein warned of the dangers of unrestrained cravings for generality, it should not be thought that he was an enemy of generalization itself. He knew perfectly well that there is no thought, no explanation, and no understanding without generalization of some sort. He was also aware (rather more than Bouveresse acknowledges) that his own method of philosophical criticism—which depends on an ability to discern recurrent patterns, offer similes, and hypothesize orienting "pictures" underlying modes of thought (such as the Cartesian picture of thoughts or sensations as inner objects)—bears more than a passing resemblance to some of Freud's own proclivities. Actually, Wittgenstein and Freud have an important common ancestor in the Romantic organicism of Goethe, whose approach to such topics as botany, color perception, and comparative anatomy was based on an estheticized, intuitive discernment of subtle physiognomic similarities taken to indicate the *Urphänomen*—the primary phenomenon or prototype supposedly underlying all instances of a given type. It was Wittgenstein, however, who seems to have had greater critical distance from this intellectual ancestry.

Serious problems arise, in Wittgenstein's view, when a theorist's craving for generality conspires with the natural human tendency to ignore one's own role in interpreting the world; when, for example, the psychoanalyst (or the philosopher or would-be scientist) forgets how preoccupation with certain models can cause one to fix on particular aspects of a given symptom or event and to ignore all other features—to forget that, as Wittgenstein put it, "there are certain differences you have been persuaded to neglect." This is what occurs when the unconscious is treated like a person or a place—and also when unconscious processes are seen as having much the same kind of meaningfulness, deviously strategizing intentionality, or even logical articulation and coherence as may characterize our more lucid moments of conscious awareness (as in Freud's theory of the "perfectly rational dream-thoughts" that supposedly underlie the manifest dream-content). In the latter case, Wittgenstein wrote, psychoanalysts seem to be "misled by their own way of expression into thinking. . .that they had, in a sense, discovered conscious thoughts which were unconscious": that is,

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they treat unconscious experiences as if they were exactly like our most lucid, conscious ones—except for what seems the entirely contingent fact that these experiences were somehow happening in the dark.

Wittgenstein is not saying that such comparative, pattern-directed, similarity-seeking modes of thought could or should be avoided. His point, rather, is that only by recognizing them for what they are, can one avoid the effacement of differences and the consequent distortion, vacuity, or dogmatism that otherwise occur. Freud's failure to demonstrate this kind of critical self-awareness is bound up with his commission of a closely related error, an error Wittgenstein viewed as perhaps the cardinal sin of the philosophical tradition: this is to confuse what is really a method of interpretation, frame of reference, or way of representing facts with a set of discoveries or hypotheses about the external world itself. G. E. Moore reports that, in the early 1930s, Wittgenstein said that Freud's books were an excellent place to look for philosophical mistakes, "because there are so many cases in which one can ask how far what he says is a 'hypothesis' and how far merely a good way of representing a fact—a question as to which [Wittgenstein] said Freud is constantly unclear."

Freud usually presents his views as bold empirical hypotheses, but as Wittgenstein noticed, many of his claims are not actually capable of being verified or falsified through empirical observation. The notion of dream as concealed wish fulfillment, for example, cannot on principle be refuted since it actually serves as a principle that organizes and limits the *form* of discussion or reflection on the topic in question; in fact, it offers the criterion of what, out of an infinity of possible associations, will be allowed to *count* as the meaning of a dream, symptom, or slip. It follows that what may seem to constitute potential counterexamples to psychoanalytic claims, often turn out, as various critics have noted, to be less a threat to the claims of the theory itself than a challenge to the ingenuity of the interpreter. This is clear enough if one reflects on the impossibility (or, at least, extreme difficulty) of finding counterexamples, given, for instance, Freud's willingness to countenance the possibility of masochistic or self-punishing wishes and even of forms of anxiety that are supposedly pleasurable; and if, in addition, one recognizes the psychoanalyst's discretionary power in selecting his data. The recollections of an American psychiatrist who underwent analysis with Freud bring this last point out very nicely: "I would often give a whole series of associations to a dream symbol and [Freud] would wait until he found an association which would fit into his scheme of interpretation and pick it up like a detective at a line-up who waits until he sees his man."

Frank Cioffi, Sebastiano Timpanaro, and others have pointed out the widespread presence of this and other sources of empirical nonrefutability

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in Freud's theorizing. Their arguments demonstrate the one-sidedness of Adolf Grünbaum's critique of Karl Popper's denial of the scientific status of psychoanalysis because of what Popper saw as its empirical unfalsifiability, as well as of Grünbaum's own, rather tendentious portrayal of Freud as a would-be empiricist or falsificationist. It is true that some of Freud's claims—such as Grünbaum's favorite example, Freud's association of paranoia with male homosexuality—may generate refutable predictions, a point Wittgenstein acknowledges; but there are many other claims that clearly do not generate such predictions.

Wittgenstein's remarks on psychoanalysis are occasional, unsystematic, and primarily critical in intent; he never wrote a sustained treatise on the topic. It is therefore difficult to say with confidence what his positive recommendations for psychoanalysis might be. But it is clear that Wittgenstein's attitude toward frameworks of understanding that are empirically irrefutable is far more tolerant than Popper's (Wittgenstein, we might recall, is a major source for Thomas Kuhn's notion of the paradigm). What Wittgenstein criticizes is not the *adoption* of such frameworks, but only Freud's tendency to mistake them for empirical assertions. It also seems unlikely that he would adopt a postmodern position, arguing that psychoanalysis can, in fact, always and only be a form of rhetoric or persuasion, offering a merely mythological, narrative, or esthetically pleasing account. It is difficult, however, to go much beyond these two points—to say, for instance, whether Wittgenstein would have recommended using psychoanalytic assumptions and frameworks to generate empirical hypotheses of a genuinely scientific sort, or whether he viewed the domain of human motivation as (like history) too particularistic and context-bound, too multifarious, elusive, and value-imbued, to allow for the possibility of meaningful, non-platitudinous generalizations about human motivation. On this last view, psychoanalytic explanations, like historical ones, might be real enough, even though necessarily *ad hoc* and elucidatory rather than rule-bound, general, or predictive. One can find in Wittgenstein's comments on psychoanalysis evidence that he favored each of the last two views. My own opinion is that Wittgenstein, the almost instinctual enemy of over-generalization, would have refused to choose between these alternatives, arguing that psychoanalysis is really a heterogeneous perspective that involves scientific (or at least proto-scientific) *as well as* more purely hermeneutical elements.

The question of the scientific status of psychoanalysis has traditionally been supposed to be bound up with the issue of what sort of explanation it offers—whether, to be specific, it accounts for human action by invoking reasons or by invoking causes. As Bouveresse notes in the chapter he devotes to the reasons-versus-causes issue, Wittgenstein was

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inclined to stress the difference between two "grammars" or "language games" that are at issue, the one involving knowledge of efficient causation, the other, pursuit of teleological intelligibility. A cause, Wittgenstein argues, is something that cannot be known but only conjectured, and that can only be established by observation of empirical correlations between a cause and its purported effects. A person's recognition or avowal is irrelevant to establishing the causes of his action; it does, however, play an important role in establishing reasons.

Freud generally portrayed himself as a scientist pursuing causes of psychological phenomena. Wittgenstein suggests, however, that his actual methods are far more akin to those of an esthetic investigator seeking agreement as to the aptness of certain comparisons. The shared features of, say, *infantile behavior* and *adult sexual activity*, or of a *given manifest dream* and a purported underlying wish, cannot be established by experimental or rigorously empirical methods of investigation; rather, the phenomena are placed side by side so as to elicit (an eventual) acknowledgment by the person being interpreted—a method that may be appropriate for establishing reasons but not for validating causal hypotheses. As Bouveresse points out, Wittgenstein does not deny a certain kinship between the language games of giving causes and giving reasons; he nevertheless believes that Freud's tendency to conflate these language games constitutes a serious grammatical "muddle" that has created an "abominable mess" of theoretical confusion.

Bouveresse also mentions a more cynical interpretation of Freud's confusion of reasons and causes. The philosopher Frank Cioffi argues that (what he sees as) the illegitimate psychoanalytic tendency to speak of reasons as if they were causes has actually been "ingeniously exploited" by Freud and his disciples in the interest of protecting psychoanalytic theory from any possible source of refutation. It allows Freudians to treat a person's acknowledgment of a hypothesized motive as counting in favor of the hypothesis (since it *is* a kind of reason), without forcing the Freudians to treat refusal as counting *against* the hypothesis (since the hypothesized motive is also a cause, thus independent of possible acknowledgment). And this, insists Cioffi, smacks less of grammatical muddle than of a certain grammatical flair, a flair for immunizing oneself against all possibility of epistemological risk.

As I have suggested, Bouveresse's book is at its best when he lays out Wittgenstein's critical views concerning the pseudo-scientific aspects of psychoanalysis and its affinities with metaphysical philosophy. It is less effective in conveying the complex set of affinities and divergences of sensibility and ambition that made Wittgenstein feel, at the same time, both profoundly attracted to and repulsed by the Freudian perspective. As Wittgenstein himself realized, sometimes to his own despair ("I destroy, I

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destroy, I destroy," he wrote in his personal notebooks), he is an exceptionally negative philosopher, far more inclined to criticize than to justify or defend. But this is no reason to ignore Wittgenstein's statements of admiration for and kinship with Freud, or to downplay the similarities that exist between psychoanalysis and Wittgenstein's own project of intellectual clarification and self-criticism.

Wittgenstein did often warn against being preoccupied with depths, with what "lies *beneath* the surface," and stated that what he wanted to understand was "already in plain view." In fact, however, he was powerfully interested in delving below the surface of grammar in order to clarify—and ultimately, to dissolve—underlying pictures that captivate and mislead us. "In our language there is an entire mythology embedded," he wrote. "The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of *depth*. They are deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language." All this is certainly reminiscent of psychoanalysis. Other resemblances to psychoanalysis include Wittgenstein's fondness for illness metaphors, his predilection for constructing illuminating metaphors and similes, his inclination, at times, to connect philosophy with the personality that produced it, and his belief that the insight one seeks is ultimately directed toward a transformation of personality or self. "A philosopher," he wrote, "is a man who has to cure many intellectual diseases in himself before he can arrive at the notions of common sense." "It is sometimes said that a man's philosophy is a matter of temperament, and there is something in this. A preference for certain similes. . . ." In a passage from an unpublished manuscript which Bouveresse neglects to quote or to mention, Wittgenstein explains why psychoanalysis, which he elsewhere compares with metaphysical philosophy, can also be likened to his own brand of philosophical clarification and critique:

> It is a principle function of philosophy to warn against false analogies. To warn against the false analogies which lie embedded in our forms of expression without our being fully conscious of them.
>
> I believe our method here resembles psychoanalysis which also makes conscious the unconscious and thereby renders it harmless, and I believe that this resemblance is not purely superficial.

It is with regard to Wittgenstein's second ideal, that of awe or wonder, that the sensibilities of Freud and Wittgenstein most truly and most sharply diverge. To appreciate this point, one must consider their respective

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attitudes toward knowledge, especially toward the enterprise of scientific as opposed to mythic forms of explanation.

Freud, at least in his ambitions, was a true child of the Enlightenment. Despite occasional gestures to the contrary ("The theory of instincts is, so to say, our mythology; instincts are mythical entities, magnificent in their indefiniteness," he wrote in the *New Introductory Lectures*), he was, for the most part, deeply committed to causal-deterministic forms of scientific explanation, and inclined to skeptical dismissal of the claims of myth and religion. Wittgenstein's view was very different. Though he is in many respects the deeper skeptic of the two, his is a curious skepticism, profoundly dubious about doubt itself and peculiarly sympathetic to belief. Wittgenstein, who had been trained as an engineer, wrote that he himself found scientific questions interesting, but never really gripping. Hypotheses, cause and effect relationships, even the sorts of insight psychoanalysis could offer: in his view, none of these could address the truly significant issues or existential dilemmas of our lives. "In a way, having oneself psychoanalyzed is like eating from the tree of knowledge. The knowledge acquired sets us [new] ethical problems; but contributes nothing to their solution," he wrote. Wittgenstein believed, in fact, that the causal and scientific understanding so prominent in our age often had the insidious effect of *concealing* important questions—by giving a false sense of inevitability and turning us away from the richness and multiplicity of the world. "People who are constantly asking 'why'," he wrote, "are like tourists who stand in front of a building reading *Baedeker* and are so busy reading the history of its construction, etc., they are prevented from *seeing* the building."

Here, perhaps, lies the most significant contrast between Freud, child of the Enlightenment and would-be scientist of the mind, and Wittgenstein, the near-mystic and harsh critic of the present age. Wittgenstein occasionally wrote of what he saw as the greater wisdom implicit in mythic as against scientific accounts of the world. If religious myths "explain," it is by postulating entities that are flagrantly, even proudly, inexplicable—miracles, gods, and the like; these do not dissipate our awe but merely focus it. By contrast, scientific myths—and here Wittgenstein would surely have included many of the claims of psychoanalysis—leave us with the distinct impression that everything has been accounted for; they give us the illusion of explaining a world that we would do better to wonder at.

We must realize, then, how very different were Wittgenstein's and Freud's *motives* for their respective attempts to clarify hidden analogies and pictures underlying human thought and understanding. Both men did, in some sense, travel to the depths; but whereas Freud was searching for ultimate, underlying truths, Wittgenstein's goal was to disabuse us of any such expectation. Indeed, one might say that clarity, for Wittgenstein, was largely

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in the *service* of awe: his critical energies were directed at unmasking what he saw as the pseudo-explanations that tend to come between us and the world, blinding us to the sheer mystery of its existence.

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CZESLAW MILOSZ

A Ball

He gives to the chief the head of an enemy
Whom he pounced on in the bushes by a stream
And hefted with his spear. ——A scout
From the enemy village. It's a pity
It wasn't possible to capture him alive.
Then he would have been put on the sacrificial altar
And the whole village would have had a feast:
The spectacle of his being killed slowly.
They were rather tiny brown people
Presumably no more than a meter-fifty tall.
What remains of them are some ceramics,
Though they did not know the potter's wheel.
Something else, too: found in the tropical jungle
A granite ball, immense, incomprehensible.
How, without knowing iron, could they dress the granite,
Give it a perfectly spheric shape?
They worked it for how many generations?
What did it mean to them? The opposite
Of everything that passes and perishes? Of muscles, skin?
Of leaves crackling in a fire? A lofty abstraction
Stronger than anything because it is not alive?

Translated from the Polish by Czeslaw Milosz and Robert Hass

SUZANNE PAOLA

Prayer To Seal Up the Wombdoor

Because we need to remember
that memory will end, let the womb remain
untouched. Its walls
an image of the earth without us—

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No form sharpening, no clutter
of umbilicus,
no fingers diverging from their webs.

Generation is an argument.
It says
my finitude is my infinity: I will shape from it
another & another.

& these will go on, like numbers
that through division can continue, if a little less
each time—

But infants press
against two oblivions: the one before,
the one after. And one being
can never outrun two deaths.

Let's celebrate the emptiness, the other place.
Let's create, like God, both void & image.
And carry our end
as we've carried ourselves, in imagination—in film & theater,
statues & mirrors, the long gaze
at our own face.

Look in. See the earth
greening again: closing around
the long bright scars of cities.
When plastic's
rare, an honorable fossil. All glass
finally polished in the sea.

When the reign of the nude skin, the opposable thumb's
over, when the argument runs
whether bones should crouch or stand in the Hall of Humans.

Will it be crows who inherit? With towns
in treetops, winds holy, beauty a pure dull black.
Or beetles, asking themselves
how we ever made love, all gravity & heavy limbs.

Maybe by then the fumes of the toilet-tissue plant
will have risen past the atmosphere, & whales will be back,
thick as cattle, with a dim mythology of bloody ships.
Let's insist on contingency, on seeing

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our earth is our dream, false
& mutable: blacktopped, split
through the geometries of building & plowing, daylight
dragged into nighttime in small glass bowls.

Let my body stay as it is, saying
we have done our damage, all
in the name of imagination: let something else
through its mind, mar
the surfaces of things.

GLYN MAXWELL

Dawn on the Midi

In the one pink hour these villas
have to themselves before the English voices;
in the time before the couple
start winding back the eyelids of the windows,
I pass as close as one who needs to see them
can pass to the lost owners

who are riding the end carriage
of the Blue Train to the sheet of light they'd fashioned
to flutter for a time
between them and a future that was waiting
politely by, with hands as disinclined
to mercy as a clock's are,

or smiling at the window
of the First Class then running backwards waving
saddened into smoke though—
two sights she wakes from on a lip of light
and ribbon and remembers where she is now,
mid-afternoon in heaven,

and soon to be seen stepping
the marble staircase, all the hood and fuss
with the viewfinder crucial,
while the twelve at lunch or whist beside the palm-tree
go quiet as now, passing as close as any
who won't see you can pass

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to you who note them plainly,
or me in this bird-yellow hour these houses
have to themselves, while the breeze
has breath enough to puff the toys in races
across our idle and impulsive pool,
stone-deaf to the sea breaking.

EUGENIO MONTALE

Arsenio

Hurricane weather!
The wind makes spindles of dust,
beats them over the roofs and on the empty
esplanade before the glass-faced hotels
where the horses stand, their heads in hoods,
nosing the ground.
On this day,
now quenched, now on fire, you go down
the road along the sea, while
again and again, rending the weave
of hours, comes a rattle
of castanets.

It is the signal of another sphere; follow it,
go on towards the horizon which raises
a lead-gray waterspout above its vortices,
more vagrant than they; a whirling club
of salty raincloud
thrust at the sky by the upstart element;
don't mind that your feet
drag through loose pebbles,
that you stumble through tangled
rags of seaweed on this beach: perhaps
you have reached the moment for which
you've been waiting, when you may stop
spelling to the end, link by link,
the chain that binds you—the old
march without motion,
the frenzy, Arsenio, of inertia. . . .

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Hear how the wavering jet
of a violin among the palm-trees is
choked off when thunder
rolls over with a clanging of struck
sheet-iron; but the storm is mild as
the dog-star bursts white
in the blue sky and the pouring dark
withdraws; the lightning flash that splits it
stretches branches like a precious tree
in air that grows red, and the timbal
of the gipsies throbs without sound.

Go into the depth of that hurrying shadow
that changes noon into a night
of lit lamps along the water's edge
swinging from invisible standards,—
beyond, where sea and sky have become one blackness,
the wink, only, of acetylene
from the anchored boats—
until the sky shakes,
explodes into drops, the ground steams as it drinks,
everything churns about you, wet awnings
flap, a rustling passes over the earth like a giant comb,
and the paper lanterns, squeaking,
flatten themselves on the pavement.

And so, lost among the dripping mats
and wicker chairs, yourself a pulled-up reed
that trails slimy roots exposed at last,
you shake with life and shrink
towards a void full of voice full of lamenting, gasping.
But the old wave throws itself over you
like a net, and again
everything reclaims you, street arcade
walls mirrors fix you
in the frozen union of a dead multitude,
and if you feel a touch, hear a word
at your side in this dissolving hour, Arsenio,
maybe it is the witness of a
stifled life that the wind
sweeps into the ashheap of dead stars. . . .

Translated from the Italian by Millicent Bell

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GÖRAN SONNEVI

from "Disparates"

There shall be life
after us
in forms we can
not divine
maybe not even
as branches of
the same tree

*

Dark entities of
non-existence
into which people are drawn
and destroyed
perfect
ovens
without smoke
without ashes

*

We stand before
the great, the blinding
that is light's
abyss We are drawn
in toward it, as toward
a mirror, a spring
that withdraws

*

Light as air, soft as water
the voice comes
from a thousand throats
At every stone, at
every strip of sand
the faint
sound of lapping

Translated from the Swedish by Rika Lesser

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LYNNE MCMAHON

House

This is our future now, or caretaking present
in what will be the continual present,
white clapboards, green shutters, brick stoop,
and what will let us take it in?
To walk around in it? Undo balustrade, century,
dusk penumbra of the goats
and peacocks whose domain this was,
cypress cypress tuliptree and redbud.
The noisy children behind our noisy children
peeled back.
Noumenal shimmering prophetic dream house,
the dream's a scaffold of such
reality squirrels run up and down the ribs of it
and over the stone sleepers
beneath. Tomorrow they will still be stone.
The bricks' impress
will still say Missouri. Beautiful susurrus
Missouri, caught boat
of all our imaginings. Like likenesses
the real of faith.

CAROL MOLDAW

After A Long Journey

Now you've ridden both elephant and camel;
now you've worn the sackcloth of remorse,

carried the assassin's sap-sticky blade,
the suppliant's lamp of sesame oil, and now

you've planted the warrior's leaf-tipped spear
in front of my mud hut, reclaiming your stake

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in my yes and my no. The gong rings out your hour,
hour and gong both forged in a bellows-fed flame;

your forehead's three forked veins, a trident
throbbing as you stoke the coral bed of coals.

MARK RUDMAN

Modern Disaster: (To a Friend From the Southwest Whom I Missed Seeing When He Passed Through New York)

I must say I was baffled by your appearing disappearance,
your approximate proximity, your nearness, as Holderlin's said,
and your absence, as Holderlin said.

The impossible blossom of the magnolias arranged,
arraigned on this cross street and others I cross
reluctantly, wishing, half-wishing?, that time would stop,

that I, delinquent, could drink this delicious May.
Without interruption.
Without: soliciting calls, simulations of virtual reality.

Without having my attention drawn irrevocably
to disasters, having my mind taken from me
every time I frequent gym or bar: sound or no sound,

captains—I mean *captions* for the deaf—
are there to trammel on retinal field.
There's no escape from news of firestorms "south of Denver

threatening to cross over into Arizona," or
broadcasts, not the phenomenology of the crash itself,
but of the "search for remains of the ValuJet plane

and its contents" that went down in the Everglades.
(Why can't they cover some other occurrence?
It's not as if they hoped to find anyone alive.)

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The divers in wetsuits dipping their masked
faces, testing the turbid waters; the divers who,
unfazed by small fry like the local

snakes and alligators, must now wait for special—
"lighter and tougher"—wet suits to protect their skin and lungs
from heat and other toxins, like jet gas.

But a swiftly moving lightning storm prohibits the dive.
As if lightning, which Heraclitus praised for being
the lord of all, would waste time on a wreck!

Newscaster: "I've experienced turbulence even on commercial airlines."
As if life were a walk across a field and lightning
would refrain from striking a metallic object with a better logo.

And the brutal heat, presaging thunder, must be nothing less than
"the worst in history" for this precise day in May,
and what CNN announcer can spare air time to mention

the fish who stayed alive in their tanks after a five—or was it ten?—
hour power outage in a pet aquarium in Miami.
And "what if" I am dehydrated and two of my closest friends

should call from different time zones to say they've been
doubled over with pain from kidney stones, saying "men
have no idea how much water they should really drink."

Time manages to pass despite these crises
and divers have sighted the crate believed to be the empty
wreckage and wander through muck to unearth

(—would dislodge be the more accurate word—?)
the black box buried in the silt; divers who have
"no doubt that the box," impervious to ruin, is not *in*

the bottomless "sinkhole" and sure "if it's in water
it's salvageable," and will tell the public all it has to know
about the death of the unretrievable dead.

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KEITH WALDROP

The Ghost of a Hunter

He reads: *What soul suffers in secret, the flesh shows openly.*

Deep within, in a region hardly accessible, a bold self-image sends messages of bloodshed and conquest, which reverberate in his heart of hearts.

[I forget which hand is writing.]

He does not doubt that he exists.

The five senses have left their mark on him. It is a record of what has happened to him, but he cannot talk or travel until he finds a body of water.

A man who has lived on reindeer's flesh amuses himself with ripples.

In this cage was once a nightingale. In the echo, new words for wind.

The usual convulsions, *and a green cat.* And, after all, months or years are nothing to him.

[My image contains his body.]

His body contains bodies.

Blemishes.

Inglories.

Vague figures, in a howling wind, and with no notion of perspective.

Of countless ruined worlds, he would appropriate the essential emblem. Wall struggling with wall, shadow with shadow.

Thousands of miles a day.

He gazes across an unguarded cemetery—gazes idly, waiting for new equipment.

As through a fixed window, he finds a kind of space, the visible world foreshortened.

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He does not see deeply, but—still—one thing behind another.

He keeps a tiny bird, folded like a sheet of paper.

Twice two is four—still—and a circle has no angles.

Body sheds shoulder, jaw. *However body may appear, the soul comes back in scars.*

[There are no dead. Only names.]

Too close, ruin wrinkles the surface—his breath bothers reality. The sun pours down. The pots are mended.

An unfolding, from where it is all contained.

The ships have been salvaged. [I do not know what body he has in mind.] Clothing is resumed. Temples are rebuilt.

"Which body?" we inquire, while all the liars cry out, "Verily!"

As though all this were in the dark.

Here is a column of soldiers, a heap of apples, an avenue of trees. Here a swarm of bees, of birds, a row of equidistant lines. A *set of unequal objects* distributes the field of vision.

Here is the painted world in an actual image. [I have no theory for the clouds he sees.]

DEBORA GREGER

The Laurel Tree by the River

Then she saw the waters. . . . "O father," she cried, "help me! If you rivers really have some divine powers, work some transformation, and destroy this beauty which makes me please all too well."

Ovid: Daphne to Peneus

1

The mountains come down to water level,
the water rising to meet the mud,
ducks mating in the muck
in the season of love.

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All month I watched over my father
where he lay, like the old river he was.
His mind meandered where it would,
braiding around me, whoever I was.

I stood there, rooted.
He doubled back to damn the daughter
cut off, the oxbow lake
who still owed him grandchildren.

Where was the river that used to bear
the gods of sun and tumbleweed
on its broad back,
from one snag to another?

I hugged the muddy bank,
I, his daughter, the one
whose leaves grew leathery
and poisonous, the mountain laurel.

2

In the dry season,
the leaves grew careless,
drawing near the fire.
Where the traveller warmed himself last night,

the clearing has been left to smolder—
so a man would journey all this way
just to lay his hand to the trunk
of the tree I'd become.

To brush his lips against the bark
and claim he felt a heartbeat,
these leaves rustling in breeze
or betrayal. Something stood still.

The duck was stuck on her nest,
the drake nowhere to be seen,
now that she sat brooding.
How he had chased her once,

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running over the water to nip at her neck.
Deep in the woods, a dog bayed
after something smaller and smaller
crashing its way through the understory.

CAROL E. MILLER

Herd

There are horses representing earth,
horses representing sky,
horses representing the approach of death.
There are horses representing horses.

There are winged horses and sea
horses, saw horses and work horses.
This one is a clothes horse, that one
a horse of a different color.

There are Belgian horses and Arabian horses,
walking horses from Tennessee, and of course
horses in Italy—and this is true—some of these
horses are killed still in the belly of the mother

horses, for the fineness of their pelts. New horse hair
makes fine belts, and boots, and watchbands, even.
There are horses worn at the waist, the wrist,
on feet shod and hobbling.

These are horses of the flesh.
There are horses of spirit, dream horses,
horses watching at the windows of sleep,
horses with great laughing teeth in the dawn.

There are horses transcending, horses
that have only begun. There are horses,
the sun behind them stretching into night,
near a cluster of trees, facing east.

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NIKOS DAVVETAS

Dream

I was hungry in my sleep
and all evening long my dead sisters
fed me salt

then I was besieged by an unquenchable thirst
my larynx dried
"whoever offers you water
—they whispered to me—
do not look him in the face
if you want to wake again"

startled, I went down into the yard
our well was sealed
on it sat naked an unknown woman
from her nipples flowed cool water
I looked her in the face
she had no eyes
only two silver coins.

My thirst was quenched, but I was hungry again
and all evening long my dead sisters
fed me salt.

Translated from the Modern Greek by Peter Constantine

ROBERT B. SHAW

In Passing

Geese going over flaunt their perfect V,
charging the air with cries. Of Victory?
Or Vacancy, surrendering the north
with the rank clamor of their going forth?
So we might wonder, even as we know
the literal translation well might go

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more like a brusque announcement: "Coming through."
(But who are we to speak
for each south-faring beak?)
Tossed from the clouds, their parting harsh halloo
distracts us from these rusty leaves we rake
but for a moment. In their dimming wake
we stand, marooned in stillness on the edge
of what they oar away from in their wedge:
the waters soon to lock, the hardening ground,
the tarnished heavens closed to the earthbound.

CHARLES WRIGHT

American Twilight

Why do I love the sound of children's voices in unknown games
So much on a summer's night,
Lightning bugs lifting heavily out of the dry grass
Like alien spacecraft looking for higher ground,
Darkness beginning to sift like coffee grains
over the neighborhood?

Whunk of a ball being kicked,
Surf-suck and surf-spill from traffic along the by-pass,
American twilight,
Venus just lit in the third heaven,
Time-tick between "Okay, let's go," and "This earth is not my home."

Why do I care about this? Whatever happens will happen
With or without us,
with or without these verbal amulets.
In the first ply, in the heaven of the moon, a little light,
Half-light, over Charlottesville.
Trees reshape themselves, the swallows disappear, lawn sprinklers do the wave.

Nevertheless, it's still summer: cicadas pump their boxes,
Jack Russell terriers, as they say, start barking their heads off,
And someone, somewhere, is putting his first foot, then the second,
Down on the other side,
no hand to help him, no tongue to wedge its weal.

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HEIDI URBAHN DE JAUREGUI

The Freedom of a Poetic Mind

Wir kämpfen nicht für die Menschenrechte des Volks, sondern für die Gottesrechte des Menschen.

Our struggle is not for the human rights of the nation, but for the divine rights of humankind.

Heine, *Über Deutschland*

"Ich bin ein deutscher Dichter, / Bekannt im deutschen Land [I am a German poet, and known throughout the land]." This resonates with all the self-confidence of a boy whistling to keep his fear at bay in the woods. Heine's "Ich aber war nicht geladen [But I was not invited]" sounds rather more like himself. On this point he was right, for quite a long time: my old copy of the *Geschichte der Deutschen National-Litteratur* of 1901, which devotes entire pages to the most bizarrely obscure names, grants Heine only three disapproving sentences. He was not invited to the *Nationalspektakel* that developed beginning in the first years of the nineteenth century. It is partly his Jewish ancestry that accounts for his clear-sighted and combative oeuvre, one that never succumbs to the pathetic tendencies of the age. He himself seems to attribute the greatest importance to his warrior-like mode of expression: "I have never set much store in poetic fame, or whether people praise or criticize my work; this concerns me little. But set a sword on my coffin, for I have been a fearless soldier in the struggle for the liberation of humankind." The first sentence, at least, seems something of an exaggeration. No true poet undertakes his ceaseless efforts without an eye to fame. Heine does not so much reject fame as emphasize the primacy of the fighter within himself. The above sentences can be understood only with the addition of this explanation from the poet: "My poetry arose from the very same thought as my political and philosophical writings."

Like any great poetic *oeuvre,* Heine's contains a strong inward-looking element, not conforming to the world but rather drawing the world towards itself with a powerful hand. The tenor of his thought and feeling, independently establishing their voice in defiance of the anti-Napoleonic, anti-French Zeitgeist, is already clearly established in the boy-poet of "The Grenadiers," a ballad inspired by Napoleon.

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The most varied camps claimed Heine as one of their own, though most were ultimately compelled to concede that their ends were not served by his work and thought, and wrote this off to a supposed spineless unreliability—even at times, in vile fashion, classifying this as a typical feature of his Jewish ancestry, set off against "Germanic devotion and constancy." Börne, himself a product of the Frankfurt Ghetto, spoke for many in expressing the shaky impression Heine aroused: "Heine has no idea where he is headed, or who his friends and enemies are. He has two backs, and fears the blows of both aristocrats and democrats." On his deathbed, the man himself gave added impetus to this mistrust as he attempted to shock his somber and serious visitors with remarks like "Did you truly assume that I always hold my opinions?" or "I tend not to put my errors into action. Who knows when they might still prove useful to me?" Thus it happened that he found an admirer the likes of Nietzsche and an enemy in Karl Kraus, both of whom got worked up over his apparently playful juggling with words and images. But he continued to see the joke as an outgrowth of thought and not as the expression of inane silliness, retiring behind his bons-mots when the pathos ran high.

Such spontaneous ideas made it difficult for a superficial observer to perceive the unusual continuity of his thought. The man reproached for irresoluteness by the irresolute remained ever firm in his own beliefs. In his learned book on Heine, Walter Grab arrives at the conclusion that the poet remained true throughout his life to Bonapartism, to Hegelian philosophy, and to Saint-Simon's thought. One might perhaps condense all of this to say that Heine was a socialist monarchist. From today's perspective, that amounts to two sins over the legal limit, but the same could be said in Heine's time. In contrast to his romantic colleagues, Heine was not nostalgic for the days of chivalry, his views on the *ancien régime* similar to Goethe's; his poem "Marie Antoinette" portrays a society of headless ghosts. He remained an admirer not only of the French Revolution generally, but especially of Robespierre and Saint-Just, the "mountain preachers," as he called the montagnards. He, who had nothing of the ascetic in him, was very circumspect regarding the consequences of the life he led, as well as that of the German Jacobins. He paid a respectful visit to the Georg Forster's garret, and showed the greatest reverence for the last living German Jacobins whom he met in exile. Ultimately, the July Revolution took him to Paris, an event that put an end to the Bourbon restoration. ("I am all joy and song, all sword and flame!") His pen was sharpest in the struggle against the reactionary German régime, in particular the Prussian one with its "King of Empires;" this Heine, often a victim of censorship, is well known. Heine's only *Tendenzgedicht*, "The Weavers," commissioned by Marx, is also the best-known example of the

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genre, one in which the poet was otherwise unpracticed. Thus it happens that Heine is considered one of the pre-Revolutionary poets, the *Vormärzdichter,* with whom he had so little in common.

A true *Vormärzdichter* was Börne, just to name an example. Heine called him an "agitator" and a "public caretaker full of bloodthirsty sentimentality," a man who, in Heine's account, ruined many of the poet's best meals (a beloved time when Heine liked to forget about the troubles of the world) with his revolutionary speeches. To put it anachronistically, we could say that Heine was neither a '68-er nor a Green Party type. Börne reproached him for this "sybaritic personality" and also claimed that the only part of truth he loved was the beautiful. The pampered Heine, he said, could be "stirred from sleep by the falling of a rose petal." Heine saw Börne as a "boor of equality" who "gladly lolled around in plebeian muck" and wanted thereby to take Heine down with him. What bothered the poet about left-republican politics was not only the ill-bred behavior of its adherents but also their ill-bred thought and poetry. Here was a subject close to his very essence, for he was a stylist of the highest order who repeatedly emphasized that the purpose of art lay not in its substance but in the manner of its treatment, and also that, should things come to such a point, he should be attacked not for what he said, but for how he said it. Perhaps he was left-leaning, but with propriety: not in rags, nor waving banners, but, as it were, in silk and velvet, making his entrance to the rich tones of strings playing. This had a confusing effect and was considered a deceptive tactic. Art created to achieve practical ends was a contradiction for Heine. "Let my song be fantastically aimless." Like Goethe, he identified high art with the greatest objectivity, and one may even see him agreeing with Brecht, who saw bad art as an ill-honed weapon, as no art at all.

He kept his weapon close by, and partly for its sake he often affirmed that he was a monarchist, since he found that "society is republican by nature." At the same time, "a great poet's laurels have always been as detestable to our republicans as the purple mantle of a great king." Since these "equality-boors" wished to annihilate the intellectual differences among men, they ultimately declared an "equality of styles": "A fine style was actually decried as aristocratic. One often heard the opinion that a good democrat writes like the people, badly, with an honest straightforwardness." For him, the supposedly democratic fad for naturalness, contemptuous of form, was an abomination. In an article on the degeneration of French dramaturgy, Heine sounds like Goethe: "The theater is a world as separate from our own as the stage from the pit." Between theater and reality lay the orchestra, and "the fire-line of the stage apron, a dazzling light and sound that strikes the prosaic public as unnatural, and yet

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is more natural than nature in the usual sense: a nature elevated by art to the most fertile godliness." Poets, alas, must pass together with kings. No great poet could thrive without a firm faith in authority. Hence, says Heine, when Dante passed through the streets of Verona, people pointed to him and whispered, "He has been through Hell!" The conclusion: "When democracy takes over, all poetry is finished."

But his decided opposition to the revolutionary unrest of 1848 in Germany, on which he wrote deprecatory verses, was not exclusively aesthetically based. He saw it as a premature revolution, and therefore ridiculous. For Heine, a revolution should spring from anger and compulsion, not from the people's sympathetic feelings and sentimental misapprehensions. "The people, this poor king in tatters, has found its flatterers, court lackeys ever gushing praise for its virtues, crying out 'How beautiful is the people! How good is the people! How intelligent is the people!'" But this, says Heine, is a lie, for the people in reality is ugly and ill-willed if it cannot find enough to fill its stomach. Indeed, Heine has less in common with the champions of the people, whom he called "demagogues" (using Metternich's insult without a trace of irony). He felt that he had very real reasons to be cautious with them: "Although I am a radical in England, and a Carbonari in Italy, still I am not one of the Demagogues in Germany because of a simple coincidence: when these celebrated a victory, several thousand of the finest Jewish throats were cut." This was ultimately what repulsed him. The "army of German revolutionaries" swarmed with the "maniacs of Germanness," who had made life difficult for him even in his student association days. Their Wartburg festival, at which the most progressive writings were burned with the Napoleonic Code at the top of the list, he termed a "barbaric revel" and "ghastly." At such events the past croaked out its "dark raven-song" and "idiocies worthy of the most inane moments of the Middle Ages" were said and done by torchlight. His fateful pronouncement that "where they burn books, soon they will burn men," was his presentiment of the darker days of more recent German history that were yet to come. Even former friends like Venedey, returned from exile and elected to the Church of St. Paul, now landed in the "black, red, and gold of Old German rubbish," and demanded the return of Alsace-Lorraine from France. He saw St. Paul's as an odd "menagerie," that only a "boor" would be capable of describing fully. But he was most deeply shaken by his old friend Laube, who "betrayed reason and truth" by becoming a student of Jahn, and "concocted the most asinine dreams of Germanhood, *Volkstum,* and ancient-acorn-smut-dom."

He detested the Black, Red, and Gold as much as the Black Eagle, but not because these were German emblems. He was much more fearful of the manner in which the "Romantic" Friedrich Wilhelm IV used them in

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a dangerous combination. Heine, who established his poetic career at eighteen with a hymn to Germany completely free from irony ("I now sing Germany's fame"), was now singing in a somewhat different key, but he never abandoned his astonishingly deep feelings of love and honor for Germany. When, in "Winter Tale," he says that his "eyes well with tears" as he steps anew onto German soil, his words are to be taken at face value. It indicates no disdain on Heine's part for the Fatherland that he envisioned the "clumsy little ogre" as the one who would someday realize the unprecedented revolution that would put an end to all previous French revolutions. Still, he considered the black, red, and gold congregation at St. Paul's a collection of political asses and descendants of the *"Deutschtum* rabble" from whom he would have himself and his Germany spared.

Nonetheless, our attention is drawn by the fact that he, ally of the Jacobins, has difficulty finding good words for the Revolution of 1848 in France. Perhaps his ever-worsening health lay behind his reticence here. In February, on his way to the sanatorium, he encounters fighting in the street. His coach becomes material for the barricades. He writes his mother that the "spectacle" has destroyed him "physically and morally." The battles in July of the same year, the first with the substantial participation of the Paris proletariat in which Heine foresaw such a great future, were for him no more than "three horrible days," "universal anarchy, a motley crowd, divine madness made visible." Yet we may ultimately assume that the primary reason for this harsh condemnation was neither his illness nor the fact that this political change put an end to his state pension, granted by Louis Philippe to all emigrants who, as Heine puts it, "compromised themselves among their countrymen to some degree for the Revolution's sake." In their evaluation of the world, great poets are less influenced by their personal feelings than at other times. Heine writes to Campe, the publisher: "I have never altered my attitudes, and hence have nothing to change in my books in light of the February Revolution." He knew well what he was saying. All forms of wishy-washiness were alien to his nature, tantamount in his eyes to betrayal; this was sensed by many of his friends. Even in "Lutetia," one of his last publications, this is apparent: "All disloyalty is hateful to my eyes." What is highest in art was what is highest elsewhere: "the self-conscious freedom of the mind." So whence comes this apparent backtracking from the Revolution of '48? I do not see this as a step back; when he wrote his friend Meissner in April 1848 that he had never been a republican, this was nothing new. Börne and others often reproached him for this, stamping him as a monarchist. During the February Revolution, he writes, "the wisdom of the brightest fell to pieces" and "inanity's chosen" were elevated onto a pedestal.

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This is precisely why Heine is so often misunderstood. He was very decided that the people deserves its right and that it should fight for this if necessary. (His conception of this right was very broad, not restricted to the right to life, but extended even to the right to a good life.) But this did not mean that the masses were ready to take over society. Since they were not educated, they were "easily manipulated," as words shouted into a forest send back an echo. The people is "without character," today proclaiming "Hosanna" and tomorrow, "Crucify him!" Hence, for Heine, the need for "great individuals' strength of mind" to steer the people. Since he recognized no such guiding force in the Revolution of 1848 (when forces "without the slightest knowledge of political navigation" were at the helm), he dismissed the events as anarchical. This was the classical attitude that we know from Goethe: better injustice than disorder. He was taken by the Jacobins, who had in their arsenal figures like Robespierre and Saint-Just who could give the signal to the masses when the time came. But the '48ers had no such "worldly saviors," only a military alliance between the masses and a few intellectual spokesmen as in 1789. God knows he was no aristocrat, but in good Saint-Simonian fashion supported a meritocracy where the demands of the people were entrusted to the most gifted and industrious, instead of to the "middling exponents of the will of the Party," or those who chummed up with popular whim. The will to dominate was less hateful to him than mediocrity and incompetence. Hence he managed to praise an (albeit brilliant) opponent, the notorious reactionary who forbade the publication of Heine's works although (or perhaps because) he knew them well and appreciated them: "Even in the turmoil of his heart, Metternich has never played the demagogue. It was always clear that he was acting magnificently within the framework of a system, driven neither by love nor by mean-spiritedness."

Heine saw no larger system, only base tendencies. If there was anything he detested, it was what he called a "coterie economy" (what we today would call a lobby economy). What the poet expected of a good leader was that he transcend party politics and bring the demands of the majority into harmony with the course of history. For Heine, a universalist was required, someone capable of moving from the "synthetic generality" to an "overview of the whole." There is nothing surprising in this, since in his view being consists of the exercise of art and power, as well as the coordination of the world's manifold contents in a highly objective vision. Here, too, there is room for a touch of charisma: "Gods are distinguished by their gaze, which is unswerving, like that of Goethe and Napoleon. It does not waver."

Heine's admiration for Napoleon is well known. One tends to emphasize how powerful and durable it was, lasting throughout the poet's life, but the quotation most often repeated is one that dates from his youth, on the

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occasion of the eighteenth of Brumaire, the day on which Napoleon broke the peace and elevated himself to Consul. Still, there is a vast supply of later remarks on Napoleon. In the fragment "Waterloo," written shortly before his death, Heine calls Napoleon the standard-bearer of a free and truly democratic Europe against the "flag-aristocrats." The battle at Waterloo was lost by "the interests of freedom, equality, brotherhood, truth and reason." When the mature Goethe designated Napoleon as the ever-enlightened "compendium of the world," the late Heine matches him step for step: "Napoleon was not made of the wood that kings are built of; he was made of the marble that is the stuff of gods." In his "Winter Tale," he describes how he was moved to tears in December of 1840 at hearing "the forgotten love-cry 'Vive l'empereur!'" as Napoleon's casket was led down the Champs-Elysées from Ste. Hélène's to the Invalides. Many have attributed Heine's unflagging reverence for Napoleon to his lifelong gratitude for the Napoleonic Code, which gave the Jews of the Rhine Valley the rights of full citizenship. But, as we have said, Heine was not a man to subordinate the course of his life to moments in history. Napoleon, the one who "tamed the many-headed monster of anarchy" without resorting to populist flatteries, was not only the incarnation of the people's will, but also the enemy of all abhorrent forces. He was besieged, in Heine's view, by the English moneybags, the Spanish clerics (who had rallied their faithful against him), the Prussian military (prudently spared from the fire on the Wartburg), and Russia's slave hordes. He exalts even the Russian campaign, which had cost so many their lives, as a "triumphal procession of freedom and equality," these last threatened with ruin "by cold and slaves."

He condemns the bourgeois republicanism of February 1848, and supports the election of Louis Bonaparte as President. "The most secure equality among men, the most genuine democracy," could flourish only under one sole "will of the people incarnate." I feel it is not necessary at this juncture to set Heine's ideas against our own experiences. History before Heine was obviously well-stocked with illustrious examples of tyrants and evil sovereigns; of course Heine made no attempt to deny the dangers wrought by abuse of power, having fought them more vigorously than others. But he considered other forms of government to be wrong from the outset, and extremely damaging in the long run: the direct, unmediated rule by the masses (including proletarian dictatorship, which he feared), and rule by interest groups like the "coterie economy" and "plutocracy." This explains why he was assailed by the Left as well as the bourgeois democrats and the less powerful sovereigns. He would have needed three backs to cover this threat, but the only one he had was already bent.

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Heine apparently had no taboos, not even those typical of the Left. Hence when he explains, in good Saint-Simonistic style, that the issue was not to destroy the old Church, but rather to build a new one, and that "far from wanting to destroy the priesthood, we want to make ourselves priests," he did not shun the old images and concepts, only infused them with new content. The worldly religion of the followers of Saint-Simon struck him as a "great springtime notion full of the joy of God." It was partly this sensual streak of Heine's that held him away from Communism. In this regard, he was better (and earlier) educated than his fellow poets, since he was in contact with the young exiles Marx and Engels. He was astonished by the rigidity of their thought and feared its consequences. Although he considered Marx one of the great minds of the century, he was nonetheless too short on patience, and possibly also on theoretical knowledge, to have engrossed himself in thick tomes of economics like those of Marx, who sent Heine one of his early works, *The Holy Family*. At the time of Heine's death, this book was found with only one-fourth of its pages cut. The man who had so thoroughly comprehended the laws of his century saw himself as no abstract thinker. This may explain why the last volume of a series on German philosophy, on Hegel (whose colleague Heine had visited in Berlin), unfortunately never saw the light of day. Heine was well aware of his debt to Hegel, whom he called his "great teacher," but of whose work he nonetheless said that "the most meager hospital-broth of Christian charity injects more life into languishing humanity than the cooked gray spider web of Hegelian dialectic." Marx had the greatest understanding for Heine's eccentricities, knowing that poets are "oddballs" that cannot be measured "by the standards of usual men or even unusual ones."

But there were also other reasons for Heine's abhorrence of communist rule, of the "dark iconoclasts." "The pure and sensitive nature of a poet," he thought, bristles at "any personally close contact with the people." This is a surprising confession, which must have taken some courage to express. Almost all poets feel this way, but Heine actually says so. The delicate poet now truly saw how the proletariat, these "dreary fellows," burst forth from "the ruins of the present régime like rats." He was quite proud of himself for having spoken so early about this "dangerous actor." It was still too early to know the Communists completely; they were ridiculed as the first Galileans were, but he had recognized that these Galileans were destined for power on a world scale. The otherwise derisive Heine, it appears, took the coming change so seriously that all his irony left him. He describes the change with an almost solemn pathos: "'Communism' is the secret name of the dire antagonist that sets the rule of the Proletariat, and all that goes with it, against the present bourgeois

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régime. It will be a frightful duel. Communism, though seldom mentioned today, is nonetheless the dark enemy to whom has been allotted a great, if passing, role in this modern tragedy, awaiting its cue to enter."

The world dominance presaged by Heine has not entirely come to pass, there being surely a qualitative difference between regional and total dominance. Yet one might still compare the scenario that bothered Heine with the east-bloc regime that remains fresh in our memories. Heine's anxieties call to mind those of my own childhood. Children of a West German bourgeois family, we used to lie in lookout in a safe and distant hideaway for a man people had told us was a Communist. It gave us a sensation of danger: of course he looked intimidating, and any day he might have discovered us. When I grew older and visited East Germany, I observed many such fearsome men up close and was disappointed to realize that they were no different from you and me. They seemed completely to have abandoned any early taste for radical action they might once have had. All I saw was large groups drinking coffee, offering me cakes whenever I approached.

Heine was particularly horrified by the prospect of "general equality of cuisine—where the giant gets the same portion enjoyed by brother dwarf." This situation, so thoroughly enjoyable for the dwarves, is quite the opposite for the giants. But how he would have been surprised at the portions given to a few poets in that eastern land, though some of them might not have been exactly giants, as if Marx had truly been heeded in his tolerance for poets. As for the "hard-won achievements of so many centuries," and all the "hodgepodge," so beloved to Heine, that he perceived to be endangered by the new rulers, I would say that Goethe and Heine received the highest honors in that country, together with all the hodgepodge, and once, strolling along Unter den Linden, I encountered Old Fritz riding toward me. But as for his royal castle, Heine would have had as much trouble finding it as he would the Tuileries Castle in Paris, whose Renaissance walls had to yield to the new urgency of the bourgeois republic. Newcomers start by tearing down what they later rebuild with great effort, and badly. But as for the poet's worries about the black soup, Spartan in flavor, that was so unpleasing to his palate, he found it tolerable until the day of a much-needed redistribution of wealth, but it was quite another matter to wait until the new order achieved an equally needed growth of this wealth. We can easily see both phases from a distance, but the two cannot be brought together. Was this close to what Heine meant by "horribly raw, common Communism?" Some may feel that the poet's fear of too-strictly enforced consequences of Hegelian teachings is overstated. (In contrast, he praised the Catholic church for its "clever system of mediation, its wise concessions to life, and the concordat that, to some

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extent, it sponsored between God and the Devil.") Perhaps the eastern bloc, I have heard, did not exhibit a perfectly strict implementation of the beliefs that lay behind its establishment.

There were two beliefs of the Communists that he liked best, notions that he thought they copied from the followers of Saint-Simon: the idea of the "exploitation of man by man," a realization Heine felt to "far overshadow any declamations on the privileges of birth." The other, deriving from Hegelian philosophy, was the conviction that history was a process of evolution. That this must lead to a golden age was a notion of Saint-Simon to which Heine subscribed wholeheartedly; without this conviction, he would have brandished the sword of poetry with much less force. "Here on this earth we will attempt / To build heaven's kingdom," is his response to the "Lullaby of Heaven," that he made long before the Communists could. On his deathbed, the poet consoled himself with the thought that the ruin of the descendants of the 1815 Teutonic nationalists would surely come at the hands of the Communists. He considered them, like himself, born cosmopolitans, whose homeland could only be the world itself, in which his ancestors were so widely dispersed. When he speaks of the great battle between the unpropertied and the aristocracy, in which neither nationality nor religion would play a role, but only one fatherland (the world) and one belief (in worldly happiness), it sounds as if he has read an advance copy of *The Communist Manifesto*. He was of the opinion that there were large areas of agreement here with the "fundamental dogma of Christianity." But his *Internationale* was that of the poet, that "writes not for moments of passion, but for centuries; not for one country alone, but for the world; not for one race, but for all humanity." This is why he joined no party, not even that of the Saint-Simonists. He took it as the highest compliment when a Saint-Simonist once said of him that he was no "party man," but "a man of progress."

Long before Marx, Heine had studied the workings of capital dominance; this, together with his reverence for Napoleon, accounts for his hatred of England. He felt that there more than elsewhere he heard the "sibilants of egoism," and that the majority of "average Englishmen" had much of that brutal energy with which the Romans repressed the world but they combined that "Roman wolf-hunger" with "the serpent-wiliness of Carthage." But his primary objection was to the "trivial feelings and superficial thought" he encountered there, the fixation on material daily concerns and on sheer necessity, leaving no place for art. "On all the docks in England you encounter no single unifying idea, nothing but steamships and hunger." His friend Marx used these two elements (among others) as the basis for a most fertile work. Heine's grasp of the mechanism of capital dominance was more intuitive: "If you have much, then you will soon /

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Get much to add to this. / But one without, will one day have / this little wrested from him." It is odd that he forgot in practice what he clearly knew in the poem: he was a frequent speculator in the stock market, with very little success, lacking the means to get involved on a large scale.

In Paris, too, Heine found ample material to study the dominance of the bourgeoisie. Louis-Philippe was not the people's choice but that of "a small coterie of financiers." In Heine's view, it was the bourgeoisie, not the people, who started the Revolution of 1789 and put an end to that of 1830; it was this against which the people was now reacting.

Such was the course of history. At no time would he have wanted to turn it back (as did Balzac, who fled backwards from bourgeois rule into the nostalgia of the *ancien régime*). How could the faithful Jacobin have disavowed the Great French Revolution, whose heir was Napoleon? Like Goethe and Hegel, he had no illusions about history's present progress through a phase of bourgeois rule. Napoleon made this path more hopeful in his eyes, and this is why he seized on any solution that seemed similar, however distantly, to Napoleon's, even clinging ultimately to Louis-Philippe. Heine takes special note of Napoleon's predictions for the world, which would become, in Heine's formulation, "either a Russian-style universal monarchy or an American-style republic." What has here seemed to some a hauntingly accurate prediction is actually simply the announced alternative between a dark restoration and bourgeois rule. Heine's comment: "What a prospect! To die in the best case of boredom as a republican! My poor grandchildren!"

When we die, it is probably not of boredom; Heine was referring to that prosaic pragmatism and short-term opportunism that sooner or later kill any efforts that aim to soar. In such an environment there is no place for "beauty and genius." He could only portray this predicted time as bleak and hostile to art. As for boredom, time would indeed weigh heavily upon a mind rich with ideas in a period unfavorable to great notions. Heine was accustomed to consider history and the present that derives from it in a significant and universal manner; this has often been overlooked, since he generally couched his thoughtful visions in a conversational tone, thereby also making them more cheerful. "A new song, a better song / My friends, I now compose for you!" Because of this cheerfulness, there was reluctance for a long time to acknowledge the poet's seriousness at such moments. Any contraband packed in with Heine's verse and prose is still not clear to many of his admiring readers. Poems like: "There grows enough bread on this earth / For all of humankind, / Rose and myrtle, beauty, passion, / Including even peas" are taken as utopian poetic lullabies "To lull to sleep, when it cries / that giant lout, the people." These verses contradict Heine's fear (mentioned above) that the only thing that can be shared is shortage.

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The characteristic clarity of Heine that emerges from his poetry runs counter to the modern penchant for the esoteric, so useful in obscuring our realizations about the world. Heine: "What we do not realize is of no value to us." Such sentiments show that he was not willing to abandon the Enlightenment to lapse into some sort of mysticism of the occult. This is the same spirit that speaks through this anthropocentric statement of Goethe: "A distinction that gives the mind no foothold is no distinction at all." If we add to that Heine's anachronistic creative ethic, the orientation of his mind becomes clear: "Creation is but pointless activity / That bungles itself in moment's time; / But planning and thoughtful consideration / Are what reveal the true artist." His erstwhile friend Laube thought that Heine was born in the wrong era, compelled to rely on his purely poetic makeup in a thoroughly political age. To put it another way: Heine was a born classic, but for a Jew with the genius of a German classic born in nineteenth-century Germany, there was no choice but to become the peculiar case of Heine.

Translated from the German by Jim Tucker

ZBIGNIEW HERBERT
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KAREN WILKIN

A Critic and His Critics: The Reception of *Clement Greenberg: A Life* by Florence Rubenfeld

Off and on, over the past decade, there have been rumblings in the art world about an imminent biography of Clement Greenberg. The author, Florence Rubenfeld, seemed to be getting in touch with just about everyone who knew the controversial critic (I suppose this is the place to say that I was one of them, although we stopped speaking the last four years of his life) and the word during Greenberg's lifetime was that he approved of the project, at least at first. The book was eagerly awaited by both friends and foes, especially after Greenberg died, aged 85, in 1994. Whatever you felt towards the man—who was a master at alienating even those of us who admired and respected his work—it was obvious that an intelligent, carefully researched Greenberg biography would complement the four volumes of his collected critical writings published between 1986 and 1993. At best, it could provide a context for the evolution of his thought and, at the very least, it might set the record straight about some of the more vexed issues of Greenberg's career—and there were plenty of them—both public and private, all grist for the rumor mill over the years and in need of clarification (which is not the same as justification or even explanation).

Unfortunately, the first thing to be said about Rubenfeld's *Clement Greenberg: A Life*, which finally appeared this spring, is that it's a wretched book—confusingly organized, poorly written, and, despite its author's vaunted years of preparation and long interviews with her subject, surprisingly sloppy. Anyone who knew Greenberg will recognize the mercurial, sometimes brutal personality and the harsh, pitiless voice evoked by Rubenfeld's study and find much of the behavior she describes familiar, but it's hard to see why anyone would pay attention to the complicated, flawed, abrasive individual who emerges from her pages—if you didn't already know that he had been in proximity to some of the brightest intellectual and cultural lights of the recent past. Rubenfeld states at the outset that she

Editor's Note: Clement Greenberg (1909-1994) contributed art criticism to *Partisan Review* from 1939 to 1955.

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has not written an "intellectual biography" but rather a "social" one—a curious distinction, given that her subject's reputation was established by his articulation of ideas and aesthetic perceptions. She does attempt—very superficially—to summarize Greenberg's thinking and to grapple with some of the factors that influenced his formation as a critic, but most of her discussion draws heavily on other publications. You won't learn anything new, for example, about Greenberg and the New York Intellectuals, or anything substantial about Greenberg's contribution to art critical writing, or anything illuminating about the nature of his connection to the artists with whom he was most closely associated. You certainly won't get much sense of his wholehearted passion for art or of how his eye and his thinking were affected by his studio relationships with painters and sculptors. Instead, Rubenfeld perpetuates old accusations and half-truths, dredges up old grievances and resentments, without being too scrupulous, for the most part, about presenting all the evidence. A great deal of the information in the book, from small points to large ones, can't be trusted. The one thing we can demand of a biographer is getting the facts right, whatever conclusion he or she draws from them; *Clement Greenberg: A Life* is so riddled with errors that is impossible to rely on anything Rubenfeld tells us.

Yet despite its evident inadequacies, this disappointing effort has been received with respectful attention, even praise. Because it is the first biography of the most notorious, celebrated, and disputed of American critics and because anyone seriously interested in the history of twentieth-century art must take Greenberg's criticism into account, *Clement Greenberg: A Life* has been reviewed everywhere—from the *New York Times* to the *Los Angeles Times*, from *Artforum* to *The New Yorker*—by everyone from Arthur Danto to Adam Gopnik. And more. When Greenberg's collected critical writings, edited by John O'Brian, appeared, their publication set off a similar flurry of articles. That responses ranged from the admiring to the hostile was not surprising, since Greenberg's reading of the development of modernist art has come to be regarded not as a definitive tracking of the course of adventurous, innovative art, but as only one of many possible ways of describing what happened in painting and sculpture during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But whether they agreed or disagreed with Greenberg's views, writers discussing his collected essays made enormous efforts to come to terms with what the critic had actually said during the thirty years—1939 to 1969—covered by the four volumes. Whether they posited the influence of the New Criticism on Greenberg's method or found a Marxist notion of historical inevitability in his reading of modernism as each discipline's gradually purging itself of everything not intrinsic to its medium, reviewers of the collected writings were attentive

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to Greenberg's words and, albeit to a lesser extent, to O'Brian's introductions and notes.

By contrast, most reviewers of *Clement Greenberg: A Life* seem notably uninterested in weighing its merits or flaws as a biography. Instead of evaluating the book, many have seized the opportunity to evaluate its subject, both as a critic and as an individual, airing their most cherished, longest-held ideas about Greenberg, treating Rubenfeld's book as a handy source of anecdotes to bolster their preconceptions. Others have used the occasion to parade their own aesthetic values. As a group, the articles offer more information about their authors' prejudices than about the biography in question.

The most egregiously self-serving review—and one of the first to appear—is Gopnik's long, sophomoric effort, whose subtext is the author's evident wish to convince his readers that he is much smarter than the person he is writing about. Even ostensibly positive comments seem worded in ways calculated to offend, leaving no doubt about Gopnik's innate sense of superiority and basic hostility. "Greenberg became a dictator-critic," Gopnik writes, "because his judgements were, at a crucial moment, courageous, and right. He was never the pilot of the New York School, but for a long time he was the wind in its sails, and it wasn't all hot air." (Greenberg would have been horrified by the idea that anyone other than the artists of any "school" should be their "pilot"; "art gets along just fine without criticism," he often said when anyone trotted out the old accusation that he "told artists what to do.")

Gopnik's strategy is typified by his *précis* of some of Greenberg's ideas about the evolution of abstraction: briefly, that modernist artists increasingly engaged with "purely" aesthetic issues as traditional languages of representation and narrative became increasingly exhausted. Gopnik begins by discussing Monet and Matisse and ends with a comparison drawn from popular culture—Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino, and Busby Berkeley are invoked—whose only function is to remind readers of how tuned-in the writer is, in contrast, presumably, to the outmoded Greenberg. Most of what Gopnik has to say is mean-spirited and so silly that it doesn't warrant discussion. He may have read Rubenfeld's book; he hasn't read much Greenberg, which doesn't stop him from opining on the critic's lasting contributions. Gopnik admits the importance of Greenberg's "crucial revaluation upward of the reputations of Matisse and Monet" and further concedes that Greenberg was "an inspired amateur historian and a great curator without portfolio," but he dismisses him as a critic. "Good criticism leaves a halo around its objects, like a ring around the moon," Gopnik pontificates; "Power criticism leaves only a residue, like a ring around a bathtub." Apart from the fact that the "ring around the moon" simile seems

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meaningless, I would have said that good criticism illuminates its objects, not like a halo, but like a good, strong, revealing light shining on them. Power criticism—like Gopnik's—illuminates not the object, but the critic's desire for attention. To change metaphors, it leaves a bad taste in the mouth.

William Corbett, writing in Boston's *Artsmedia,* is less self-involved than Gopnik, but he, too, reveals more about himself than he does about the book under scrutiny. Corbett describes Rubenfeld's mission as an effort "to rehabilitate Greenberg's reputation as an art critic" by showing him to have been a detestable man whose enemies revenged themselves by burying his art criticism. Rubenfeld's "totally engrossing" biography, Corbett declares, convinced him both that Greenberg was "every bit as arrogant and belligerent as gossip has made him out to be" and that "many of the attacks against Greenberg the thinker and writer were really attacks against the man." But that's as far as he is willing to go. Grudgingly acknowledging Greenberg to be "a plain, powerful, persuasive writer" possessed of "fine powers of analysis," the review goes on to describe him as "irrelevant, a crank whose ideas can be neither sustained nor convincingly argued by his examples." The proof? The inadequacy, in Corbett's view, of the art that Greenberg "believed embodied quality." Corbett sees no merit in the work of Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, or Morris Louis—magnanimously, he allows that he can accept "the standard of Pollock, de Kooning and [David] Smith"—so none of Greenberg's criticism is significant.

What art Corbett responds to and what he dismisses is, of course, his business—if you can ignore his irritating, self-congratulatory tone—yet one sentence in his review suggests that his difficulties with Greenberg stem not from differences of taste, but quite simply from a profound misunderstanding of everything the critic wrote or espoused. "Rightly or wrongly," Corbett writes, "I find myself responding to too much in art *to put a theory before the testimony of my eyes* [italics mine]." Whether you share Greenberg's conclusions or reject them, the one irreducible constant in his approach was not his adherence to theory, but his reliance upon direct, unmediated encounters with works of art. Greenberg himself never claimed to be doing anything but abstracting from his experience, describing his observations, and remaining faithful to the involuntary judgments of value that he, following Immanuel Kant's reasoning, believed that the critic was obliged to make.

Fortunately, other reviewers seem to have understood Greenberg's method far better than Corbett. Witness Terry Teachout's judicious, measured article in *National Review,* which includes a good, if simplified, summary of Greenberg's contribution to what would now be called "the critical discourse" of the 1940s, '50s, and '60s—a far better summary, in many ways, than that provided by Rubenfeld. Teachout emphasizes the

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crucial point that "Greenberg never allowed his ideology to prevent him from seeing clearly the painting and sculpture about which he wrote, and though he believed devoutly that 'the very best painting, the major painting, of our age is abstract,' he was no less capable of responding sensitively to the work of such gifted representationalists as John Marin, Milton Avery, and Edward Hopper."

Teachout shares some of Corbett's distaste for the Color-Field painters, believing that Greenberg overestimated their long-term importance, but unlike Corbett, he doesn't assume that this obviates Greenberg's own long-term significance. "This time," Teachout writes, "the prophet of abstract expressionism had bet on the wrong horse, for the high seriousness of late modernism was already in the process of being supplanted by the playful nihilism of the post-modern era." But that matters less to Teachout than Greenberg's "having produced a body of writing about art that is fully worthy of comparison with the best work of the best critics of the twentieth century. Even now, it is impossible to read him without being stirred by the compelling force of his aesthetic convictions."

Curiously, whatever their own aesthetic convictions, almost none of the reviewers question Rubenfeld's accuracy. They appear to believe implicitly everything she reports, especially, it seems, the more scurrilous stories. Mind you, Rubenfeld obviously believes them herself, according ample space to anyone with anything really discrediting to report—from corrupt dealings to thuggish behavior—whether the claim can be substantiated or not. A good deal of this sort of thing is plainly verifiable. There is ample documentation, for example, for Greenberg's heavy drinking and the predictably deplorable effect it had on how he treated even people to whom he was close. The peculiarities of the branch of psychiatry he adhered to are a matter of public record. And so on. But Rubenfeld relies heavily on innuendo, quoting at length sources who say things like "I can't prove it, but I am sure. . . ." and "We all believed that. . . ," not so much to demonstrate how colleagues and peers reacted to Greenberg, but to imply malfeasance. (Rubenfeld constantly speculates about Greenberg's motives, but she rarely questions those of her informants.) And even reviewers who should know better—Peter Plagens, in a skeptical, street-smart article in the *Los Angeles Times*, for example—swallows Rubenfeld's assertions whole.

Plagens, who is justifiably proud of his cool independence of mind, is neither a Greenbergian nor an anti-Greenbergian, but he takes Pollock, Frankenthaler, and Louis seriously. More importantly, Plagens genuinely admires Greenberg's writing and values his contribution to the discipline of criticism. Whatever his disagreements with the critic's aesthetic, "we who love art owe a hell of a lot to Greenberg," Plagens writes; "I'd rather have spent half an hour reading a wonder-

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fully limpid, if naggingly obstinate, Greenberg essay than a whole afternoon plowing through an argot-laden volume by some anti-Greenberg academic whiningly preoccupied with telling me that everything art can do, partisan sociology can do better. Then I could spend the time I saved looking at art."

Plagens is an insider, both painter and critic, old enough to have been a player in the art world during the last decades of Greenberg's life—they met in 1980—yet he, too, assumes that Rubenfeld's most outrageous, unsupported statements are factual. He gleefully repeats her claim that Greenberg "smoked pot and hashish regularly, sniffed coke four, five, even six times a week, [and] sniffed heroin" during the 1970s. Plagens (and, I suspect, Rubenfeld), like anyone who spent any time in Greenberg's company, must know that alcohol and unfiltered Camels, both in large quantities, were the critic's drugs of choice. Seventies parties were, admittedly, seventies parties, and I am sure Greenberg tried whatever he was offered, but a steady habit? Anyone who knew the man would say it was extremely unlikely, if for no other reason than the utter improbability of the modest-living, parsimonious critic's actually spending the sort of money regular use would entail.

This, I suppose, is open to conjecture. What's more disturbing is that Plagens perpetuates the frequently made accusation that Greenberg grew rich by skimming profits from galleries who sold the art he told collectors to buy. Plagens states as fact that Greenberg earned $100,000 a year as a consultant to the André Emmerich Gallery—a tidbit to be found in Rubenfeld's uncorrected bound galleys but removed, along with several other questionable assertions, from the published edition of the biography since it was both untrue and actionable; Emmerich could easily prove that Greenberg never received any compensation from him and the motives of Rubenfeld's informant turned out to be, to say the least, cloudy. Why Plagens wasn't sent a corrected review copy of the book is only one question. What's more interesting is why such an informed observer is willing to believe the tale in the first place. Was it because Rubenfeld's unsavory stories fulfilled Plagens' expectations?

If few reviewers have anything derogatory to say about the book itself, most are eager they are to expand on the shortcomings of its subject. Some of this ill-feeling is no doubt justified, since Greenberg left many people who came in contact with him feeling battered. This is, of course, one of Rubenfeld's main points and it's true enough. (There are things he said in the nearly twenty years when we were still on speaking terms that I will never forgive.) Part of it was pure belligerence and competitiveness, fueled by booze, but some of it was an even purer refusal to say anything he didn't mean or to sugar-coat unpalatable truths, qualities that made him a precious,

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if potentially devastating, presence in the studios of the artists who sought his reaction to their work. ("Clem kept me honest," I've heard more than one serious, tough-minded artist say.)

But if Greenberg's ability to be provoking has survived him, so has the ability of his ideas to be provocative. The more enlightening reviews of Rubenfeld's biography take both aspects of his legacy into account. Arthur Danto, in a thoughtful piece in *Artforum,* uses this duality as a point of departure, beginning his article by quoting a description of Greenberg as "one of the great critics of the twentieth century" and a "#@!!." Danto acknowledges delicately that when he and Greenberg met, towards the end of the critic's life, they were "too distant intellectually for either of us to believe a further relationship possible," yet there seems to have been mutual respect. Not surprisingly, Danto is uncomfortable with Greenberg's insistence on the primacy of value judgments—his often-stated belief that the critic must sort out the best from the good and the less good—since his own inquiries have been directed not toward qualitative distinctions but toward separating works of art from what he calls "mere real things." Yet despite the radical differences in their approaches, Danto is unstinting in his praise for Greenberg's thinking: "Whatever my reservations as to his character or, in candor, his criticism, I regard him as among the century's great philosophers of art. . . .He was unique in seeing Modernism as a problem."

I'm not sure that Danto is entirely accurate about how Greenberg perceived modernism's relation to the past—Danto emphasizes the notion of rupture, when Greenberg often stated that modernism was a "holding action for quality," an effort to sustain in (necessarily) new terms what modernist artists saw as the excellences of traditional art. But Danto has notably perceptive and informative things to say about Greenberg's contribution: "[he] saw Modernism as a totality, sufficiently discontinuous with what came before to require a special account, and he was systematic enough to realize that 'almost the whole of what is truly alive in our culture' had to be explained with reference to the same factors. This he credited to an ascent to a level of critical self-consciousness."

The absence of critical self-consciousness both within and without the work of art, the assumption that value judgments, whether made by the artist or the viewer, are unimportant compared to other, often non-aesthetic, non-visual issues addressed by a work of art, are fundamental to a great deal of present-day postmodernist art writing. Such "texts," which substitute theoretical "explication" for the articulation of direct experience, deem Greenberg's approach to be both distasteful and beside the point. Yet even devout postmodernists who dismiss Greenberg's qualitative judgments as dogmatic and prescriptive—"patriarchal" and "elitist" are also popular—

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find it necessary to declare what they think about him in order to establish their *bona fides*. Paradoxically, despite their insistence on Greenberg's irrelevance, they can't ignore him and he is invoked as the Antichrist must have been invoked in medieval sermons. Michael J. Lewis, writing in *Commentary,* is one of the few reviewers to discuss this curious phenomenon. (He's also, along with Teachout, one of the few to point out that Rubenfeld's book virtually ignores the complicated politics, changing loyalties, and maturing attitudes toward Marx that marked relations among the New York Intellectuals in Greenberg's day.) The art world, Lewis says, is still haunted by Greenberg's discredited "ideas and prescriptions" because "virtually every one of them has been turned on its head." If Lewis reads the collected criticism more carefully, he'll discover that what he calls "prescriptions" are in fact *descriptions,* but he still makes an interesting point. It's all too true that the desire for order and clarity, like the aspiration toward excellence that spurred on Greenberg and the adventurous artists of his generation, has been discarded. "The notion of a coherent and logical course of artistic development intrinsic to every genre," Lewis writes, "has been jettisoned in favor of a willed celebration of the provisional, the improvised, the personal, and the arbitrary." The result, in Lewis's view, has not been "an improvement upon the cultural vitality of an earlier age, but a distinct and disastrous decline." In contrast to the self-indulgence and slackness of postmodernism, as a corrective to its indifference to formal rigor in the face of good intentions, or even as a "secret ideal," Lewis suggests that we reexamine some of the things Greenberg believed in most strongly, some of what he stood for: "austerity, high intellectual integrity, the devotion to formal perfection." "If we are lucky," Lewis says, these high-minded notions may "be with us for some time to come." Happily, we have the four volumes. They preserve for posterity what for many of us was the best of Rubenfeld's subject.

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MILLICENT BELL

Fiction Chronicle

CLOUDSPLITTER. By Russell Banks. Knopf. $27.50
THE ALL-TRUE TRAVELS AND ADVENTURES OF LIDIE NEWTON. By Jane Smiley. Knopf. $26.00
COLD MOUNTAIN. By Charles Frazier. Atlantic Monthly Press. $24.00

The word "history"—whatever the postmodernists claim—retains the sense of what actually *was,* however squintedly seen, remembered, or recounted. But history is also what historians *say* happened—as fiction, a *story* (that shorter word derived from it and coiled into it, like a worm in an apple). The historians' history is a sense-making tale that tries to explain why things occurred as they did and somehow makes them visible inside our heads. History is never more "virtual" than when it resembles a novel. At the same time, the novel incorporates literal history. Laying aside its pretense of invention and resorting directly to truth-telling, the novel even sometimes lets in among its imagined persons some who once strode about among living men and women—like J. Edgar Hoover in DeLillo's *Underworld,* which I reviewed in this *Chronicle* recently. Fiction often backgrounds its made-up stuff with historical events and scenes. The novel never entirely escapes making some reference to actualities. At the maximum of such reference is the so-called historical novel, which undertakes to rewrite formal history, and places historical persons at its very center. It may make a real person known to history the protagonist of a fiction that is different from a sober historical biography only because of more frankly fabricated details and incidents unknown to record.

An example of this kind is Russell Banks's *Cloudsplitter.* Fiction it is, but one is bound to read it as though it were another biography among the many that have failed to agree about John Brown (1800-1859), who died on the gallows for leading an assault on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, an event often held to be the opening battle of the Civil War (the commander of the U.S. Cavalry force that overcame the raiders was a brevet colonel named Robert E. Lee). Three years earlier Brown had led a small band of his own sons and some others in the murder of five proslavery men in the Kansas Territory. Brown's deliberate brutalism—the murdered were savagely butchered with broadswords in their homes—was

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an act of terrorism for principle of a kind we recognize all too readily today. It achieved, as terrorism often does, an intensified popular awareness of the irreconcilability of a conflict that had seemed merely ideological to many. The Pottawatamie Massacre—though it was itself a reprisal for violence by slavery men—escalated a struggle that could no longer be a matter of land claims and disputed elections. It made the perpetrator at once a figure of contrary meaning to a rapidly dividing nation. Were it not for these two occasions, Brown would have remained a minor figure in the history of abolitionism, though the organizer of a black league of "Gileadites" in Springfield, Massachusetts and the captain of an outpost of the Underground Railroad at North Elba, New York, where he lived for a few years with his numerous family. A major portion of Banks' leisurely narrative describes the Browns' skirmishes with slave-catchers and the struggles with the harsh natural conditions of their Adirondack farm. But, in 1855, John Brown left for Kansas.

Brown would be reviled by the slavery faction as a religious maniac and at the same time a con-man and adventurer, but, to abolitionists, he became a sacred figure. As he stood trial for Harpers Ferry, the gentle Emerson notoriously said he would make "the gallows glorious like the cross" by his martyrdom. His earliest biography, published immediately after his execution, was written by a correspondent for the New York *Tribune,* James Redpath, who had attached himself to Brown after Pottawatamie and declared that he had perceived in 1856 that Brown was "the predestined leader of the second and holier American Revolution." There were soon other defenses and eulogies including a "Life and Letters" published in 1885 by the Concord schoolmaster and friend of Emerson and Thoreau, Frank Sanborn, who had raised funds to support Brown's doomed raid, and, finally, the 1910 biography written by the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison's grandson, Oswald Garrison Villard, which was a prodigious work of objective research still sustaining the view that Brown's memory was "at once a sacred, a solemn and an inspiring American heritage." But Villard's book was attacked, particularly by southerners, even so many years after Brown's death. Among other hostile responses, Robert Penn Warren's *John Brown: The Making of a Martyr* offered an indictment that convicted Brown—as detractors had in his lifetime—as an embezzler and cattle-thief whose Harpers Ferry adventure was an act of brigandism. Most persistent has been the belief that the enigmatic hero/demon could be explained as a sufferer from hereditary insanity—a theory which had been promoted originally by last-minute attempts by his own attorney and others to plead legally for his life. Or that he was whatever we mean when we speak of a religious fanatic, motivated by a conviction that he is an instrument of God's will acting on divine

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instruction. But the most persuasive of modern biographies is that of Stephen B. Oates, who, in 1970, proposed an undeified John Brown who moved erratically towards his messianic destiny yet remained an awesome and tragic figure.

Banks has denied that he seriously proposes any sort of historical revision—like Oliver Stone in his movie about the Kennedy assassination. He takes no part in the battles of the historians over Brown's character and the significance of his career. Just the same, the novelist, by the design of his narrative, fictively positions himself among those who seek out the truth. In an old-fashioned gesture to suggest veracity, his book presents itself as the confession of a lone survivor, Brown's son Owen, who almost did live long enough to be interviewed, as he claims, by one of Villard's researchers. This fictional Owen aims to shed light on the question of his father's sanity and the nature of his influence over others. Above all, to make him real, to show him as a man variously capable at many trades—a skillful subsistence farmer, a tanner and a sheep raiser, a cattle trader, a wool trader, and a land speculator—and also a Bible literalist convinced of the satanic nature of slavery. Plausibly, he depicts Brown as a prototypically divided American: "Much as he wished to be a warrior against slavery, he also wished to be, like most Americans, a man of means"—and he evokes for many pages the episodes of Brown's forays into speculations that just missed success—like an attempt to capture the international wool market when he took 200,000 pounds of American wool to London. Most of these commercial efforts were failures, and Brown was pursued by angry creditors and was the subject of suits for broken agreements for years on end.

Banks does a good deal to provide that density of incident and description true history longs for but can seldom achieve in the presentation of established facts. He extrapolates from the known to the unknown to give us the Brown family members, especially those five sons who moved with their father to Kansas in 1854—John Junior, Jason, Watson, Salmon, Oliver, and Owen—differentiating their strongly individual personalities while making their father's hold on them credible. Old Brown remains impenetrable as ever, like the formidable and invariably identical photographs of him with a fixed stare and set mouth that represent him again and again. All we know is what has always been evident from the outside—his armor of staggering pride and conviction.

Owen's personal account of himself is Banks's invention. As a reimaginer of the John Brown story Banks freely pretends, novelistically, that he can break history's code with the sort of guesswork that may tempt the historian at his peril—and fantasizes a secret true account only known by this mysterious loner son, Brown's most loyal lieutenant. Unfortunately,

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this story of Owen's is a contrived and unconvincing psycho-biography. We can understand his suppressed rebellion: "There was so much that I could not understand about this man, my father, and the life we led because of him—my thoughts, my questions, were blocked, occluded by the absolute rightness of his cause, which none of us could question, ever, and by the sheer power of Father's personality, the relentlessness of it, how he wore us down, until we seemed to have no personalities of our own, even to each other." But Banks labors to provide a Freudian diagnosis, which is only postulated and never given substance—oedipal hostility born of Owen's unrelinquished longing for his long-dead mother. He hints at a sexual blockage which keeps Owen celibate except for a single early encounter with a prostitute, and he also suggests suppressed homosexual feelings for one of his father's black followers. This love results in a displaced sexual fixation on the black man's wife—and then a murder by accident when he hands this friend a cocked gun. It is his guilt for the black man's death, we gradually learn, that makes Owen the secret master of the tale we thought was John Brown's own. Banks's Owen comes to believe that he can expiate his guilt by becoming "an assassin with no principle or ideology and with no apparent religion, save one: death to slavery." So, it is *he,* the solitary and silent one, who executes John Brown's wishes again and again but actually betrays his father by focusing his wandering will upon one end.

The older man's spasmodic anti-slavery zeal is not enough. Owen calls himself an Iago who becomes the true author of those happenings that alter the course of human events. In Kansas it is Owen whose implacable will compels his brothers and father to do their bloody work: "For without my having instigated the attack and then goaded them when they grew timorous and frightened by the idea, they would never have done it." Projecting the hindsight of a modern historian back upon 1856 America, Owen says, "What Father called the will of God I now called history." He sees himself as an apostle of historic necessity who showed his father and brothers that if they did not butcher those five at Pottawatamie,

> the war in Kansas would have been over. Finished. In a matter of weeks, Kansas would have been admitted to the Union as a slave-state, and there would have been nothing for it then but the quick secession of all the Northern states, starting with New England, and the wholesale abandonment of three million Negro Americans to live and die in slavery, along with their children and grandchildren and however many generations it would take before slavery in the South was finally, if ever, overthrown. There would

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> have been no raid on Harpers Ferry, certainly, and no Civil War, for the South would not have objected in the slightest to the breakup of the Union.

I could only put *Cloudsplitter* down in disbelief when I came upon this "disclosure" by an Owen become a madly prescient historian. As I observed in the beginning of this report, it is the novel's fate and obligation to try to explain human experience, and historical novels sometimes propose explanations that connect the scattered events of history with a paranoid insistence—but the makers of real history are rarely so conscious. Owen says, "No little thing in our lives is without meaning. I did what I did, my duty, in order to free slaves. I did it to change history." Of course, however unlikely it seems that a real Owen Brown could have spoken so, he is terrifyingly right in declaring the efficacy of terror. "The terror and the rage that we caused with those murders ignited the flames of war all across Kansas, to be sure, and all across the southern states and in the North as well." Banks's revisionary fictional history goes on to Harpers Ferry with Owen—who manages to escape when the raid fails—but it does not recapitulate the trial and execution of the displaced hero, John Brown.

In absolute contrast to *Cloudsplitter* is Jane Smiley's flawed but marvelously alive novel, which takes for its subject the very same dramatic moment in U.S. history. Again we are in Kansas Territory just after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. We are made witness to the struggle between Missouri slavery men and Free Staters from elsewhere for the sovereignty of the new land. But in the place of a somewhat incredible revenant like Banks's Owen, Smiley has created a narrative personality to rival Huckleberry Finn (whom Smiley, surprisingly, has claimed to dislike). To have given life to Lidie Newton—a mixture of naïveté and wit who compels belief as an authentic witness to her world—is a triumph of virtuosity that makes it impossible not to forgive her creator's exuberant lapses of control.

Almost exactly midway in Smiley's version of Kansas history in 1858 is the following:

> There was an old man in K.T. who afterward became famous, by the name of Old Brown. He came from Ohio or New York somewhere, and wasn't related to any of the other Browns—there were lots of Browns in K.T. I can't say that I ever saw him, though Louisa said that she did. Perhaps we saw some of his sons or associates, as there were quite a few of them, riding through the town

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> or buying something here or there. They had a place south of town, down on the Marais des Cygnes, where my brother-in-law Horace always talked about settling. Free Staters and proslavery people were all mixed up down there—it wasn't pure enclaves, as it was in the north. Later, Mr. Holmes said that he saw Old Brown with his famous weapon, some kind of thing like an adze or a pike, odd-looking. But afterwards, as with everything else, all sorts of poeple wanted to get next to it, and that is why I want to stress that I never saw Old Brown or his sons or friends, nor did I know at the time that what Old Brown did would become the most famous thing about K.T. in some quarters and utterly unknown in others. The fact was, what Old Brown did, and to whom, and why, was a common story around the time that it happened, and it showed us all the new world we had gotten into and what that meant, and so most people didn't say much about it, because that was a world that most people in their right mind didn't enter willingly.

When Lidie hears about "those killings," she shocks Thomas Newton, her New England abolitionist husband, by saying, in an "unwomanly" way, "How many times do they vow to hang us or shoot us or clear us out? How many times do they call for our destruction in the bloodiest terms? It seems to me that if people talk about these sorts of things long enough, they can't be surprised when these things happen." Yet far from defining the era as it does in *Cloudsplitter,* the subject of John Brown hardly surfaces again in *The All-True Travels and Adventures.* As the eighteenth-century-style title suggests, this is a picaresque novel, a novel of the kind meant, in that famous comparison to a mirror dawdling down a highway, to reflect all and sundry scenes and persons encountered by a wandering adventurer. Born in Quincy, Illinois, which is only about twenty-five miles north of Mark Twain's Hannibal on the Missouri side of the Mississippi, Lidie is an orphan rebel who craves escape from conventional society. She has "perversely cultivated uselessness" in the performance of such prescribed female tasks as "making a ball fringe for our carpets and regular dishes of light egg custard"—as urged in the *Treatise on Domestic Economy for the Use of Young Ladies at Home* written by Catherine Beecher, whose "female seminary" she has attended. Instead, she can "ride a horse astride, saddle or no saddle, . . .walk for miles without tiring, . . .bait a hook and catch a fish and swim the width of the river and write a good letter in a clear hand." Like Huck, she takes off "for the Territory"—which is, of course, Kansas. She seizes the chance of another life when the Emigrant Aid Company pioneer who appreciates her qualities offers to marry her and take her with him to

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"K.T." She does not quite take in the meaning of one of his pieces of luggage—a trunk full of the new breech-loading Sharps rifles.

Her political interest is minimal although she remembers affectionately a half-sister who ran a school for the children of escaped slaves and had been thought "very strange, and offensive, too, for purporting to live by her conscience." Lidie is slow to come to radicalism, slow to see things in Thomas' general terms. "Abolitionists won't let anyone alone," she says. She had not come to Kansas to fight slavery. "Thomas, of course, had made it attractive, so perhaps I had taken it up as a way of being courted," she later admits. "And then, in K.T., we abolitionists had been so hated, so stupidly, venally, cruelly, and ridiculously hated, that there was honor in being an abolitionist."

Her narrative lacks the historical awareness of Owen Brown's in *Cloudsplitter.* But it is thus more true to an average person's experience of general events in a time unlike our own in which the news media, especially television, offer an instant interpretation of everything deemed significant (and, by implication, render everything else insignificant), and make everyone a self-conscious historian. Instead of a coherent account of history, Lidie gives us fragmentary reports and rumors. The names of major actors occur from time to time—names like that of the leader of the conservative free-soilers, Charles Robinson, and of the more controversial James Lane, of first governors Reed and "Shambling" Shannon, of Senator Atchison, a pro-slaver, and others known to the history books besides John Brown. We gather, confusedly, a sense of the progress of territorial politics from the summer of 1854 when pro-slavery Missouri squatters began to post claims to border lands and Free Staters began to arrive from the North, when the settlement of Free State centers like Lawrence and Topeka and pro-slavery towns like Leavenworth, Lecompton, and Atchison took place. The first election, which resulted in a victory for the pro-slavers, had been won by an invasion of Missourians and the stuffing of ballot boxes, and Free Staters independently elected their own representative body. The nearly bloodless "Wakarusa War" was followed in 1856 by the sacking of Lawrence. But all this is only a background to Lidie's lively local impressions.

Thomas and Lidie move out to their claim and build their mud-chinked cabin, where they endure the brutal Kansas winter cold but read Emerson and Mrs. Stowe in the evenings. Their family unit includes Lidie's nephew, Frank, who masters the arts of survival as a boy scrounger and trader, aged twelve. It also includes a charming horse, Jeremiah, whose gifts are revealed when Frank sneaks him into a horse race and who, when stolen, finds his way back to them. Friendships are formed and friends drop out of view. Susannah Jenkins finds Kansas too coarse and wild, and returns

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to Massachusetts. Mrs. Bush, persisting in the struggle for mere survival on the rude frontier, stuffing cartridges during the Wakarusa War, still feels uncomfortable when a cup and saucer don't match. Thomas's friend, Charles Bisket, marries the vigorous, feminist Louisa who compares the condition of women to that of the black slaves, and says that women's corsets resemble horses' saddles: "They stifle our breath and cut us in two and shape us to the liking of our masters." And poor Mrs. James's baby dies in the punishing cold in her little house on the prairie. The stream of new encounters and small incidents, humor and pathos haphazardly mixed, create an illusion of life as lived. Only, after a while, the reader feels drowned. The idea of plot contends vainly with Smiley's plenitude.

As time wears on, the incidents become more violent in character, and we remember our history books and know that we are being carried forward to a terrible climax. John Dow, a Free State man from Ohio, is murdered by a pro-slavery man but the pro-slavery sheriff arrests not the murderer but a friend of Dow's who organized a protest. A posse of Free Staters rescues the prisoner and, in Lidie's account of these true events, the rescue party includes Thomas's friend, Charles. Not long afterwards, the sheriff is himself wounded by an unknown assassin. Filling in history's gap, Banks's Owen claims that *he* was that assassin, but Lidie wonders if it could not have been her cousin Frank. In any case, what history knows is that the shooting of the sheriff was the provocation the pro-slavery governor and his supporters were waiting for, and Lawrence is sacked and vandalized by pro-slavery militia. Then, one day, Smiley's Lidie relates, Thomas is shot on a country road by proslavery men. She reflects, "Now I was a new person, one I had never desired or expected to be."

I wish the book had stopped there. But from this point, leaving history and even likelihood behind, Smiley tacks on a melodramatic fulfillment of Lidie's declaration. Resolved to avenge her husband's murder she crosses into Missouri to find his murderers, puts on a man's clothes and gets a job as a newspaper reporter while pursuing clues. Here, in slave country, she encounters, for the first time, a black child who directly asks her for help in gaining his freedom. But she does not find her husband's murderers and cannot help the slave. Struggling uncomfortably in her men's boots, which don't fit, and discovering herself pregnant under her male clothing, she collapses along a rural road. Yet her romantic destiny bubbles on like an irrepressible brook. She is promptly rescued by black Lorna, who takes her to her owner's house where she is healed and cosseted by him and his daughter. Of course, he is a widower and a perfect gentleman who reads Jane Austen, and he soon proposes marriage to Lidie—though he and his friends are slavers who may have been involved in Thomas's death. Lidie decides to help Lorna escape. They are caught,

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Lorna sent back to be punished by her owner, and Lidie arrested for "nigger-stealing." But—not to worry—she is released through the intercession of the still-infatuated slave-owner who sadly sends her back to Quincy. It is really enough—as Smiley must have realized. Lidie's "all-true travels and adventures" are finished. There'll soon be a war, but we don't hear what Lidie does during it. When it is over, she and her cousin Frank, who served in the Union Army, agree, however, that "after K.T., nothing, not Bull Run nor Gettysburg, certainly not the raid at Harpers Ferry that some thought started it all, not the emancipation nor the burning of Atlanta, not the killing of the President, nothing ever surprised either of us again."

One can say that these two recent novels about the last years before the Civil War are about the tragic intersection of violence and ideology. Charles Frazier's National Book Award winner is a Civil War novel about the exhaustion of ideology when violence has so surcharged human experience that nothing matters but the painful recovery of the ability simply to feel again. *Cold Mountain* can be compared to *A Farewell to Arms* because personal love is set against a background of war. The resemblance is really not very close, the stories are quite different and the wars that are in part the subject of the two novels are very different, the Civil War having been fought for causes—the slavery issue, the contest between the principle of national union and sectional loyalty—which bitterly divided Americans, while World War I was without ideological claims.

But Frazier's Inman really is like Hemingway's Frederick Henry in having decided to "make a separate peace" when he simply leaves the hospital, his battle wounds hardly healed. The war is almost but not quite over; he may be sent back to the front, but, instead, he sets out for his home in the Carolina mountains. Whatever political passions had once moved him, we hear nothing of them from the moment he climbs out the open window of his ward. A boyhood Cherokee friend has told him of cases, according to his tribal lore, when "a man's spirit could be torn apart and cease and yet his body keep on living." He thinks himself a case in point, "for his spirit, it seemed, had been about burned out of him but he was yet walking." His object is a village and a Blue Ridge peak called Cold Mountain. The beautiful, remote mountain, an old Cherokee woman had told him, was also a sacred place where one might find the entrance to a country whose dwellers "are not filled with fear" and "do not endlessly contend with one another." In the town he hopes to find again, after four years, a woman, Ada, with whom he had been in love, but he is not sure what self he might bring to her, for he feels himself to be only a "hut of bones." "He had seen the metal face of the age and had been so stunned by it that when he thought into the future, all he could vision was a world from which everything he counted important had been banished or had

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willingly fled." His mind, on the other hand, is full of exact visions of Malvern Hill, Sharpsburg, Fredericksburg, and Petersburg, where he had gotten his. At Fredericksburg, as the Union soldiers marched uphill across open ground, line after line in their thousands, Inman had kept firing till his arm was weary from working the ramrod of his rifle, his jaws sore from biting off the paper ends of cartridges, and he could hear without a pause "the slap of balls into meat." Afterwards, as the wounded lay on the field, many still moaning and crying, some of the poorly shod of Inman's company went out to pull off the boots of the dead against whose bodies those who could still move huddled in the cold. Again and again in the odyssey of Inman's journey these spectacles surface in his mind

But the actual scene of Inman's narrative is not battle but its aftermath and the behind-the-lines side of the War at its close in a countryside emptied of its own young men and full of fugitives and "Federals" and, more dangerously, of the Confederate "Home Guard" on the prowl for deserters. It is such a deserter, or "outlier," that Inman has become. His journey is a progress of "exile and brute wandering" along hidden trails and dark woods, shelterless, often starving, and in constant danger of being killed. Meanwhile, another story is unfolding far from the front—for this is a novel of two major narratives. At Cold Mountain, Ada, waiting for Inman's return, is trying to survive in a world without men. Her father has died, leaving her a hard-scrabble farm he never expected her to run for herself. An eccentric clergyman, he had moved with her from Charleston only a few years earlier, seeking recovery for his tubercular lungs and imagining—deludedly—that his sermons (a mix of personal quirkiness and Emersonian idealism) would be welcomed by his mountain congregation. His cultivated daughter, aloof from the small community and without any farm skills at all, is now quite alone. Yet she does not leave; perhaps she is waiting for Inman, whom she had begun to love. And, after a while, help arrives in the form of a new friend and partner. Ruby cannot read or write but knows everything about surviving with the help of nature—how to make the tiny farm give them food enough and leave them a small margin for other necessities. Her father had neglected and abandoned her when she was still a child; she possesses a wisdom born of her own hard-schooled life of privation and sorrow. With Ruby's guidance Ada begins her own journey away from her former self into a new kind of independent womanhood.

Frazier's two narratives are artfully interlaced, and are only joined at the end when Inman reaches his destination. And within each of these narratives the writer has inserted sub-narratives in the form of the recollections of Inman and of Ada, and, besides this, small stories within stories, the histories of others. The writer's rich fabric incorporates earlier moments of Inman's life as well those ineradicable battle scenes as they

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surge back in memory. It incorporates also Ada's sheltered, upper-class young womanhood. A little like Lidie Newton, she has not looked to marriage as her total destiny. And it tells the short, aborted story of her love affair with Inman. We are also given Ruby's story and the story of her father. Stobrod is a ne'er-do-well drunk who, after abandoning his child, discovers in himself a gift for improvised song and music and who lives now in a mountain cave with a community of outliers. A changed man and still the same man in many ways, he re-enters his daughter's life, and Ada's, with tragic results. And other, quite unrelated, lives work their way into the narrative. In this book, which may be faulted—like Smiley's and Banks's also—for its nearly total omission of the southern black experience, there is, at least, the story told Inman by a fellow wanderer met at a rough wayside inn. Odell is the oldest son of the richest planter in his county when he falls in love with a family slave and she is sold by his outraged father to a trader in Mississippi. Searching for his Lucinda year after year without success, never returning home again, supporting himself as a ragged peddler, Odell sees instances unknown to Inman of the white man's abuse. He sees blacks burnt alive or mutilated for minor misdemeanors and once a woman who may be his lost sweetheart in a cage through which buzzards thrust their beaks at her living flesh. Ada and Ruby, for another example, hear the story of a Home Guard captive in the town jail. He has taken a ball at Williamsburg and now, like Inman, thinks he has had enough. But Teague, the local Home Guard leader, and his tough catch him at home on his farm where they brutally slaughter his father and other outliers hiding there—an unforgettable action sequence that only film can hope to tell again after Frazier's prose has projected it on the reader's inner screen.

Inman's "all-true travels" have little of the hopeful verve of Lidie Newton's adventures; they string a series of dark encounters into an Odyssey that reaches Ithaca only to find death at the doorstep. As he makes his way on foot to the region of Cold Mountain, he comes upon the Reverend Vesey, who would have murdered a woman he'd made pregnant if Inman hadn't stopped him and sent him them both back to their town. A while later, the discredited preacher, beaten up and cast out by his parishioners and bound for a new career as a feckless itinerant bandit, catches up again with Inman and hangs on as they trudge on, making meals out of wild honey and fish caught in the narrow woodland streams, taking shelter at ramshackle inns among derelicts and grifters. Stopping to help a farmer pull a dead bull out of a creek, they are taken home, fed, and entertained by him and by his lubricious daughters, like Odysseus and his companions in the palace of Circe—only to discover that their host is a bounty hunter who gets five dollars a head for turning them over to the Home Guard. Shot down and left for dead with Vesey in a shallow grave,

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Inman miraculously survives, is helped by a passing black man, and moves on toward the Blue Ridge, starving, afraid of houses and people until he gets help again from a female hermit, an elderly, philosophical goat herder, artist, and root doctor who asks, "Was it worth it, all that fighting for the big man's nigger?" Inman is also helped by a young widow whose man died on a battlefield in Virginia, and when Federal rifleman come rushing in and grab her one hog and her chickens, he stalks and kills them, saying, "If you'd stayed home this would not have come to pass."

It is still in the violence-polluted wilderness country where men kill one another in the midst of nature's purity and beauty that Inman meets up again with Ada at last. She and Ruby have left her farm to dig a grave for Stobrod when they hear he has been murdered by Teague. In fact, he has only been wounded, and the women are nursing him in a hut in the woods when Inman arrives and the lovers have a brief idyll—soon destroyed by the same murderous gang. As in *A Farewell to Arms*, the lovers are parted finally, by death, though it is the woman, not the man, who survives. Unlike Hemingway, however, Frazier gives an upturn to his ending. After all, Inman's unborn child will survive as Henry's did not. In a final scene at the farm, a reformed Stobrod and the two women and a little girl are found surviving with some degree of happiness in the year 1874.

Cold Mountain has had the unique good luck of being both a popular and critical success. Most serious reviewers agree with Alfred Kazin's statement, in the *New York Review of Books*, that it was "an astonishing first novel." Kazin added, after this declaration, "—if that is what it is," as though suggesting caution about the book's form, but did not explain his reservation. It is more a novel than a rewritten history like *Cloudsplitter,* for all the characters in it are offspring of the author's pure imagination; Longstreet and Lee and "befeathered Stuart" are seen only for a moment, in Inman's memory, as they witness Fredericksburg from the top of Maryes Heights and Lee makes his famous remark, "It's a good thing war is so terrible or else we'd get to liking it too much." If a secondary character like the unspeakable Teague seems incredible when he bursts into the action from time to time, like the devil out of the opening called "hell's mouth" on the medieval English stage, it can be said that absolute villainy and a lust for violence are perfectly credible, as the more atrocious episodes of the past and today's headlines demonstrate. Frazier's Inman and Ada are given interiority though there is a certain flatness in Inman; he is ready-made for a Clint Eastwood movie part—brave, intelligent, taciturn, and unillusioned—the Hemingway hero—undone at the end only by a spasm of pity for a boy member of the thuggish gang that is after his life. Ada and Ruby are really more interesting, probably because the romance cookie-cutter for female personalities is inapplicable to them. But the structure of the whole, with its intricate weaving of elements, seems both formal

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and overdone. There is something arbitrary and insignificant about most of the encounters along Inman's long path, and few of the personages he meets seem more than shadowy. What deserves praise is something the movie version (for which Frazier was paid $1.25 million by MGM/UA) will have to dispense with, for the most part. This is Frazier's prose, which is vividly descriptive and poetic at once and places the book above its rivals.

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The Speculations of T. E. Hulme

THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF T. E. HULME. By Karen Csengeri. Clarendon Press. $164.50

In 1912 a book was published in London under the title *Ripostes of Ezra Pound Whereto are Appended the Complete Poetical Works of T. E. Hulme with Prefatory Note*. The complete poetical works amounted to five poems, the longest of them nine lines. In the prefatory note Pound associated Hulme with Imagism: "As for the future, *Les Imagistes*, the descendants of the forgotten school of 1909, have that in their keeping." He also remarked that Hulme was thirty years old. Hulme added a footnote: "Mr Pound has grossly exaggerated my age." He was twenty-nine.

Thomas Ernest Hulme was born on September 16, 1883, son of a gentleman-farmer, who later went into the ceramic transfer business. At school in Newcastle T. E. H. did well in mathematics and science. When he enrolled at the University of London, he went wild and got sent down. In 1906 he set out for Canada, where he made a hand-to-mouth living and survived for a year. Back in England, he started writing poems, putting his notes into essays, and meeting with literary and theatrical types, including F. S. Flint, Joseph Campbell, and Florence Farr. Pound joined the group on April 22, 1909. Hulme soon gave up writing poems and resorted to philosophy, politics, and art criticism. He was much taken with Bergson, wrote several enthusiastic essays, and in 1912 translated the *Introduction to Metaphysics*. But by then he was losing faith in Bergsonism, mainly because of its confusion of biology and theology. He turned to politics and art criticism, attending upon sterner masters, Pierre Lasserre and Charles Maurras of *L'Action francaise*, Sorel, and Worringer. His translation of Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* was published in 1916. T. S. Eliot reviewed it in *The Monist* for July 1917:

> [Sorel's] motive forces are ideas and feelings which never occur to the mind of the proletariat, but which are highly characteristic of the present-day intellectual. At the back of his mind is a scepticism which springs from Renan, but which is much more terrible than Renan's. For with Renan and Saint-Beuve scepticism was still a satisfying point of view, almost an esthetic pose. And for many of the artists of the eighties and nineties the pessimism of decadence fulfilled their craving for an attitude. But

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> the scepticism of the present, the scepticism of Sorel, is a torturing vacuity which has developed the craving for belief.

When war broke out in August 1914, Hulme joined the British Army as a private. In April 1915 he was wounded and sent home. On March 20, 1916 he received a commission in the Royal Marines Artillery. He was killed in Flanders on September 28, 1917. In 1924 Herbert Read put together a selection of Hulme's work as *Speculations*. In 1955 Samuel Hynes brought out *Further Speculations*.

Hulme's presence in literary history is small and I think getting smaller. Most scholars have given up the claims that were once regularly made for him; that he was a sage, virtually invented imagism, single-handedly turned English and American poetry from Swinburnian softness, and directed Pound and Eliot toward the "hard" Gautier. Hulme was regarded for many years as the most enabling force in Pound's gang. Now and with more reason he is seen as a footnote to Eliot.

But it is hard to understand why Eliot touted him so assertively. He began by liking Hulme's poems, especially "The Embankment"—"the fantasia of a fallen gentleman on a cold, bitter night"—which he regarded as one of the most beautiful poems in the language:

> Once, in finesse of fiddles found I ecstasy,
> In the flash of gold heels on the hard pavement.
> Now see I
> That warmth's the very stuff of poesy.
> Oh, God, make small
> The old star-eaten blanket of the sky,
> That I may fold it round me and in comfort lie.

In "Six Lectures on Modern French Literature"—a course of Oxford extension lectures in the winter of 1916—Eliot associated himself with Hulme and Sorel. In April 1924 he noted that *Speculations* "appears to have fallen like a stone to the bottom of the sea of print."

> In this volume [Hulme] appears as the forerunner of a new attitude of mind, which should be the twentieth-century mind, if the twentieth century is to have a mind of its own. Hulme is classical, reactionary, and revolutionary; he is the antipodes of the eclectic, tolerant, and democratic mind of the end of the last century. And

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> his writing, his fragmentary notes and his outlines, is the writing of an individual who wished to satisfy himself before he cared to enchant a cultivated public.

When he gave the Clark Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1926, Eliot referred to Hulme as "the most *fertile* mind of my generation, and one of the glories of this University." In "Second Thoughts about Humanism" (1929), he quoted Hulme against the humanism of Irving Babbitt and Norman Foerster. "It is to the immense credit of Hulme," he claimed, "that he found out for himself that there is an *absolute* to which Man can *never* attain." Hulme "put the matter into one paragraph":

> I hold the religious conception of ultimate values to be right, the humanist wrong. From the nature of things, these categories are not inevitable, like the categories of time and space, but are *equally objective*. In speaking of religion, it is to this level of abstraction that I wish to refer. I have none of the feelings of *nostalgia*, the reverence for tradition, the desire to recapture the sentiment of Fra Angelico, which seems to animate most modern defenders of religion. All that seems to me to be bosh. What is important, is what nobody seems to realize—the dogmas like that of Original Sin, which are the closest expression of the categories of the religious attitude. That man is in no sense perfect, but a wretched creature, who can yet apprehend perfection. It is not, then, that I put up with the dogma for the sake of the sentiment, but that I may possibly swallow the sentiment for the sake of the dogma.

In the essay on Baudelaire (1930), Eliot quoted—or rather, slightly misquoted—Hulme to much the same effect; insistence on original sin, the categorical defect of man, the necessity of order, discipline, and institutions. Baudelaire, according to Eliot, would have approved of Hulme's values.

Eliot admired Hulme because he spoke with bleak authority about original sin. A distinction between religion and humanism followed as night the day; and another one that seemed crucial to Eliot, between classicism and romanticism. I can't believe that Hulme's theory of language meant much to Eliot: it is daft. "Thought is prior to language and consists in the simultaneous presentation to the mind of two images: language is only a more or less feeble way of doing this." In literary work, "each *word* must be an image *seen*, not a counter," Hulme emphasized. "A man cannot write without seeing at

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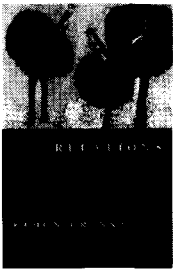

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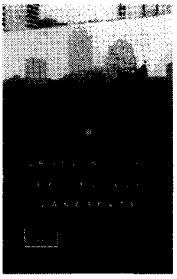

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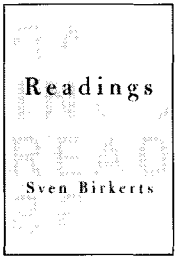

Readings

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This collection encompasses the best of cultural and literary critic Sven Birkerts, who discusses authors ranging from Robert Musil to Don DeLillo, questions the influence of technology upon sensibility, and probes our contemporary sense of time and place.

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the same time a visual significance before his eyes: it is this image which precedes the writing and makes it firm." These declarations stiffened the resolve of imagist poets, and carried over some residual force into objectivism, but they were useless for other purposes. William Empson, who always got cross when imagism was around, scolded Hulme for spreading nonsense:

> A dog couldn't find its way home across a field if it had nothing in its head, at a moment of choice, except 'a simultaneous presentation of two images.' This condition often actually does come to men lost in the desert, and they know themselves that they must either break out of it or perish.

Michael Roberts, too, showed that Hulme confused nearly every issue he touched in science and philosophy. Eliot published Roberts's damaging essay, "The Categories of T. E. Hulme", in *The Criterion*, so he may have wanted to distance himself from the sage in the end. But he never wavered on original sin.

The chief merit of Karen Csengeri's edition is that it puts Hulme's essays in the right chronological order. Read got the order mostly wrong. Csengeri has also brought out new stuff, thirteen uncollected pieces. There may still be things missing. "The present edition is the first more or less complete collection of Hulme's work," Csengeri claims. Her introduction is helpful, but I wish she had recognized the case to be made against Hulme. Roberts and Empson didn't say the last sharp word.

DENIS DONOGHUE

The Human Condition and the Comic

REDEEMING LAUGHTER: THE COMIC DIMENSION OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE. By Peter L. Berger. Walter De Gruyter. $23.95.

It was W. H. Auden who once pointed out that the two most important things to learn are how to laugh and how to pray. Peter L. Berger's reflections on the nature of the comic effectively bind Auden's categories together, arguing that laughter is an intimation of redemption and thus an activity that, at bottom, is profoundly religious. At first glance Berger's thesis seems to contradict the received wisdom—from Aristotle

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onward—that the movement from suffering to insight is at the center of tragedy's religious core while comedy celebrates the body (or is it the "bawdy"?), often in terms of Dionysian revel or the triumph of young lovers over the impediment of social restrictions. Here, a passage from Charles Simmons's largely forgotten novel, *Powdered Eggs* (1964), is instructive:

> The tragic hero says this, I am at odds with the world, I cannot change the world and I will not change myself. He goes down. We watch him go down and experience Aristotle's catharsis, which is the feeling of Yes, there was a time somewhere back then, when I too felt at odds with the world, but I changed myself—I survived. I admire this man for going down, but I am nonetheless very glad I am not he. That's why tragedy makes you sad and relieved and respectful all at the same time. But the comic hero, he only half senses that he is at odds with the world. Thus he prosecutes his folly, and so steady is he that the wide world adjusts to him. That's why you laugh and feel gay and why you love a comic hero: he has maintained his madness and survived.

So far, so good, but the long, complicated history of efforts to sharply define the comic suggests that even Simmons's delightfully rendered categories are something of a mug's game. Perhaps no one was more teasing, more frustrating, in this regard than was Socrates. In the concluding lines of *The Symposium*, he advances the curious proposition that tragedy and comedy are mirror images of one another. Unfortunately (or perhaps "ironically" is the more precise term), Socrates did not go on to unpack his bold assertion. After a long evening of booze and debates about love, his audience was exhausted. Exploring the congruences between the comic and the tragic would have to wait for another day—one that, alas, never arrived.

What we are left with, then, is something of a muddle. About the tragic sensibility we know much, however remote its essential rhythms may be to our secular, democratic age. As for comedy, the popular culture serves up versions, good and bad, in giddy abundance. The difficulty comes when we try to move from accounts of what provokes laughter (or offense) to explanations that justify these responses. What we lack, in short, is a theory of the comic able to encompass Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Mark Twain, Sholem Aleichem, James Thurber, and the latest sketch on "Saturday Night Live." No easy trick, to be sure, and one that quickly gives rise to the following complication—namely, how it is that the penchant for rigorous analysis often ends in utterly destroying the very thing it seeks

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to describe. Whatever else the humorous might be, it is as elusive as it is supremely fragile. Even Henri Bergson, surely one of comedy's most incisive "explainers," recognized this built-in trap: capturing the essence of the humorous, he sadly (wisely?) concluded, was akin to holding seafoam in one's hands.

Small wonder that most people enjoy the work of a good comedian (which is to say, they *laugh*), but then quickly dismiss the enterprise as "mere humor." Tragedy, after all, demands of us high degrees of thoughtfulness, sensibility, sophistication, and perhaps most of all, seriousness. By contrast, the comic presumably asks only that you "get it"—and if you don't (because, say, the cultural context is unfamiliar), no lectures in social history or comic theory are likely to change things. To paraphrase Rodney Dangerfield, comedy gets no respect. On the slopes of Parnassus, it has always occupied a spot on the lower elevations. At the same time, we recognize the sly wisdom packed into the bumper sticker proclaiming, "He who laughs, lasts."

Enter Peter L. Berger, a sociologist of large reputation, but an amateur (in the original Latin sense of "lover") with regard to the comic. Because he casts a very wide net in terms of examples, some specialists will no doubt take him to task for playing fast and loose with the scholarly niceties. But Berger, to his credit, remains cheerfully undeterred, and in the process spins out a book that makes clear sense of a complicated subject at the same time that it allows comic anecdotes space to "breathe." In an age when far too many scholarly studies make little effort to mask their joylessness, *Redeeming Laughter* is a refreshing exception. Berger obviously enjoyed writing this book—indeed, there are times, especially in his footnotes, when playfulness verges on distraction—but it is also obvious that he has some very serious cards up his sleeve. If, as Berger argues, comedy is an important dimension of the human experience, it requires an understanding that goes well beyond analysis as usual. To this end, he begins by stating his thesis as succinctly as possible:

> Humor—that is, the capacity to perceive something as being funny—is universal; there has been no human culture without it. It can safely be regarded as a necessary component of humanity. At the same time, what strikes people as funny and what they do in order to provoke a humorous response differs enormously from age to age, and from society to society. Put differently, humor is an anthropological constant *and* is historically relative. Yet, beyond or behind all the relativities, there is the *something* that humor is believed to perceive. That is, precisely the phenomenon of the comic (which, if you will, is the objective correlate of humor, the

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> subjective capacity). From its simplest to its most sophisticated expressions, the comic is experienced as *incongruence.*

Only human beings laugh, and only human beings are aware that they will one day die. My hunch—and I suspect that Berger would agree with me—is that this is incongruence enough. As my *zeyde* liked to put it: "How do you make God laugh?" Answer: "Tell Him your plans!" By this remark he meant to add a cosmic dimension to the thousands of more ordinary faces that incongruity can assume. Indeed, Yiddish humor specializes in quips that force theology and felt experience to take a full measure of each other. Put a slightly different way, oppressed people, as Saul Bellow once observed, tend to be witty; for them, jokes are what the fist or the gun are to their adversaries. In eastern Europe, pogroms against the Jews surely had an identifiably political face, but unlike other oppressed groups one might tick off, they had a heavenly one as well. Thus, when Sholem Aleichem's Tevye announces that, "With God's help," he starved three times a day, he is engaged in the curious brand of quarreling that most characterizes the best Yiddish humor. Incongruence? Certainly, but incongruence of a special sort, one that Uriel Weinreich, the great Yiddishist, identified as "internal bilingualism." Praying in Hebrew, east European Jews took the idea of their "Chosenness" seriously—both as legacy and continuing obligation. Only when the bitter ironies of their impoverished, powerless condition intruded did they quip, in Yiddish, that it would be far better if, next time, God chose somebody else. Because they assumed that God was supposed to act as a *mentsh* (that is, as a fully human, compassionate being) and because they felt comfortable pouring out their hearts to His ears, they railed against His injustice in ways that the comic only slightly masked. By contrast, much of Jewish-American humor is a mean-spirited quarrel with one's mother (here, Borsht Belt stand-ups and Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* spring easily to mind as examples). Berger probably laughs at a good many Jewish-American comics, but to his credit, he knows why Yiddish humor both cuts deeper and has more substance.

Whether he is talking about Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly*, *The Laughing Buddha*, or the novels of P. G. Wodehouse, Berger makes it clear that incongruity is the tie that binds disparate efforts at humor together—even if a joke told on one side of the Hudson garners only quizzical looks on the other. Take American humor, for example. Its richest achievements tend to explore the often yawning gap between democratic ideals and actual practice. Here, Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* becomes a central text, not only because it unleashes Huck's delightfully idiomatic American *voice,* but also because it takes a hard, satirical look at the racism and squalor of small town life along the

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Mississippi. We laugh at Huck's studied naïveté at the same time we realize, in Twain's words, that his protagonist possesses a "sound heart and a deformed conscience." If America is often regarded as a "dream," a country built on the essential differences between the Old [bad] World and the New, the humor such an arithmetic can produce forces us to laugh at our vaunted illusions, and sometimes to act to shorten the distance, close the gap. To be sure, the litmus test of any humor is whether or not it is funny, whether or not it entertains. Twain, who kept a close eye on the gate, knew this; but he also understood that even the best joke was not likely to survive its cultural moment—which is why he insisted that "humor should not professedly preach and it should not professedly teach, but it must do both if it would live forever." And being Twain, he followed his remark with an ellipsis, and then the kicker: "By forever, I mean thirty years." Twain, of course, has lasted much longer than that, and part of the reason is the moral sentiment just underneath his highjinks.

Humor, in a word, is *serious*—if, by "serious," one means having an intimate connection to the most important rhythms and matters of human life. That's, of course, where the rub comes in, for most serious philosophers have declined to think seriously about the comic (in this regard, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are serious exceptions). They regard the comic as, well, *frivolous,* something not worth their sustained attention. In roughly the same way, most people do not imagine that one can, in Berger's words, "simultaneously pray and joke, declare one's love and joke, contemplate mortality and joke":

> Conventionally, then, the comic appears to be banned from all truly serious occasions. This social fact has led many to the view that the comic is a superficial or marginal aspect of human life, in which case it would be perfectly understandable that serious thinkers have not paid attention to it. The present book is grounded in the conviction that such a view is very much mistaken.

By contrast, what Berger offers up is nothing more or less than *transcendence,* a term that fashionable theorists now regard as a fighting word. At one level, Berger argues, "the comic transcends the reality of ordinary, everyday existence." For the short duration of a joke the assumptions and rules of ordinary life are suspended. To appropriate some distinctions made famous by the English Romantics, a joke allows us to see the like in the unlike, the strange in the familiar and the familiar in the strange. This sense of "transcendence" carries no particular religious freighting, but Berger's second meaning of the term most assuredly does:

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> . . . at least certain manifestations of the comic suggest that this other reality has redeeming qualities that are not temporary at all, but rather that point to that other world that has always been the object of the religious attitude. In ordinary parlance, one speaks of "redeeming laughter." Any joke can provoke such laughter, and it can be redeeming in the sense of making life easier to bear, at least briefly. In the perspective of religious faith, though, there is in this transitory experience an intuition, a signal of true redemption, that is, of a world that has been made whole and in which the miseries of the human condition have been abolished. This implies transcendence in a higher key; it is religious in the full, proper sense of the word.

There is a rub, at least for Berger, in the recognition that "there is no inevitable passage from the first to the second kind of transcendence" (otherwise, every stand-up comic might consider himself—quite wrongly—as a minister of God), but there are other "rubs" as well. As a character in a Malamud story observes: "Jesus was a humorless guy"—which is precisely what a demi-god ought to be. By contrast, the Hebrew Bible contains a fair share of humor because it is out to tell the stories of vulnerable, very human beings. No doubt other religions would raise their own objections to the shotgun marriage between laughter and prayer that Berger advocates. My own view is that he protests a bit *too* much about elevating humor to a spot in the celestial spheres, but I readily admit an attraction to his thesis, first because *Redeeming Laughter* is one of the wisest, funniest books I've read on the subject, and, second, because it sees humor as yet another means of *tikkun olam* ("repairing the world") at a time when all of us could use a good laugh, and when our world is badly in need of mending.

SANFORD PINSKER

Plots and Counterplots

CONSPIRACY: HOW THE PARANOID STYLE FLOURISHES AND WHERE IT COMES FROM. By Daniel Pipes. Free Press. $25.00

Who can quarrel with Daniel Pipes's assertion that we live in an age not of increased plots but of increased fear of plots? It is hard to remember another time when so many seemingly rational people exhibited so irrational a "fear of nonexistent conspiracies" and developed so many far-fetched

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theories to describe them. One can begin with President Clinton, whose critics have accused him of improbable crimes ranging from murder to the laundering of drug money, while he, not to be outdone, enlists the services of a political adviser, Sidney Blumenthal, who in the pages of the *New Yorker* has attributed the Cold War to a homosexual conspiracy and is himself referred to by White House colleagues as "Grassy Knoll."

How did we come to this place? How did fevered speculations normally purveyed on the shabby fringes of our political culture—the domain, says Pipes, of "the politically disaffected and the culturally suspicious"—become popular sport and, worse, an essential part of our public dialogue? Pipes's timely survey puts the question in historical perspective. He notes that the phenomenon of "conspiracism" dates all the way back to the Crusades, but first gained serious credence in the aftermath of the French Revolution. With that event, he writes, "the power of ideas and the potential for radical change" became a fact of history. "Counterrevolutionaries and other supporters of the old order, within France and outside it" were nonplussed by the spectacle of "unruly mobs" tearing down the *ancien régime*, "a divinely sanctioned system." The true culprits were hidden from view: Bavarian Illuminati, Templars, Freemasons, or a combination of the three. Elaborate theories were set forth in dense books rigged out as sturdy vessels of earnest scholarship. Thus was born the genre that gave us, a century later, the most notorious and durable of conspiracist tracts, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which outlined a global Jewish plot to "subdue all the nations" and eventually achieve "sovereignty over all the world."

Pipes's narrative, though both authoritative and briskly told, succumbs in places to the reductionism he so reasonably deplores. He is not a sure guide through the labyrinths of twentieth-century history, particularly when he turns to its great totalitarian systems. He presents the "Leninist corpus" as a kind of fantasy: "financiers and manufacturers group together to extract riches not rightfully due them by keeping down workers' wages and controlling the government. . . .In capitalist countries, the state is said to represent business interests, which it helps by repressing the working class, offering hidden subsidies to corporations, creating loopholes to allow cartels, and funneling tax money to businesses. This subservience also extends to foreign policy. In particular, the capitalist need for inexpensive raw materials and labor, combined with their desire for monopolistic control of markets, drives imperialist states to fight wars of expansion." But Lenin's adaptation of Marx's theory of warring classes remains distinctly plausible, even in this rendition. The charge that wars are fought for economic reasons is not outlandish when applied, for example, to Germany's aggressions in World War I, and it is not so great a stretch from Lenin's distrust of "imperialist states" to the isolationism that has been a component

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of the American worldview ever since George Washington, in his farewell address, cautioned against the lures of "foreign entanglements." And to portray Lenin as a fanatic is to caricature the nature of his political genius, which began in his retooling of Marxian abstractions into the ideological engine of a revolutionary movement.

Not unlike the conspiracists, Pipes seems blinded by his own theory and enamored of its simplifications. "In the period 1933 through 1945," he writes, "operational conspiracism reached its apex as two totalitarian leaders drenched in its phobias and hatreds challenged the world order." What world order does Pipes have in mind in those years of confusion and upheaval, of the Great Depression and the Spanish Civil War? It was obvious then as now that Hitler and Stalin had expertly manipulated the desperate conditions of the interwar period. And to identify Hitler and Stalin as "history's two most powerful and ambitious conspiracist rulers" is to miss the point. Hitler's mad ranting theories were borrowed from the popular anti-Semitic press of his day and sounded a responsive chord among many Germans. And Stalin's belief that he was threatened on all sides by counterrevolutionary plots, while deluded, gave him the pretext he needed to eliminate rivals, real and imagined, even as he projected himself as "Lenin's heir." What distinguishes the totalitarian empire builders, in any case, is not their second-hand conspiracist "ideas" but rather their talent for translating them into actions supported and carried out by millions of their countrymen.

But as a guide to current manias, Pipes is very helpful. He covers the whole spectrum—from O. J. Simpson's defenders to Pat Robertson's musings on international bankers—and points out that conspiracist thinking, with its conjunction of malign fantasy and character assassination, crosses ideological boundaries. For every Pat Buchanan there is a Noam Chomsky, although, as Pipes points out, the Left's conspiracism has usually been more nuanced than the Right's, especially in our own era. "The Right distributes homemade videos; the Left has Oliver Stone making Hollywood feature films that win top awards." Once you get beyond surface differences in detail—black helicopters, CIA inoculation schemes, the Trilateral Commission, the "Jewish mafia"—the theories sound alike because, says Pipes, they "usually contain three basic elements: a powerful, evil, and clandestine group that aspires to global hegemony; dupes and agents who extend the group's influence around the world so that it is on the verge of succeeding; and a valiant but embattled group that urgently needs help to stave off catastrophe."

Understandably it is the grand theories that engage Pipes. But most conspiracism occurs on a local, unorganized plane, with only the occasional large-scale calamity—such as the Oklahoma City bombing—to awaken us into alarm. One wishes Pipes explored more thoroughly the commonplace

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strands of conspiratorial thinking woven into our American culture along with conspiracism's one redemptive feature, its promise to strip away the veil of mystification in which, after all, the mighty do sometimes cloak themselves and their actions. Oliver Stone and others are repeatedly wrong, infuriatingly so, but not when they assert that power is often wielded secretly and important decisions made without public consultation. Our elected officials and, more to the point, our unelected ones are not always staunch upholders of free speech and open debate. The principle of "plausible deniability" embraced by the Kennedy administration, and expressed through its infatuation with "covert" CIA operations, has been documented in grim detail, as has the FBI's long history of using tactics that arrogantly defy the nation's democratic precepts. It's true too that the government's massive but invisible bureaucracy serves as much to obscure policy as to enact it, as Daniel Patrick Moynihan reminds us in his new book, *Secrecy*. Given these conditions, some degree of conspiratorial distrust is warranted. Does it lead to excess? Of course. The eye trained to locate the figure in the carpet is bound to detect some patterns not really there.

The conservative critic like Pipes runs a similar risk, labeling "conspiratorial" any liberal argument he dislikes. Is Gore Vidal really no more than an educated version of the "right-wing conspiratorial antisemite [who] cranks out crude tracts with tiny circulation," as Pipes insists, or is he not instead a provocateur in the familiar native line that includes Mencken and Edmund Wilson? Is Michael Lind a conspiracist, as Pipes maintains, or a political visionary whose overstatements are the byproduct of an exuberantly original mind? So determined to remind us that the earth is round, Pipes is harder on the flat-earthers than he needs in every case to be. He has no patience for those who insist, against the strongest evidence, that Lee Harvey Oswald and Alger Hiss were innocent. But such protests, for all their absurdity, have their civic uses. Democracy is never imperiled by skepticism, however extreme. It can, however, be undone by passivity. Why should the official truths of the Warren Commission or a jury of twelve be received as gospel?

One wishes too that Pipes had more to say about the psychology of conspiracism. What attracts us to simplistic explanations, and why should they be so rampant today? His reticence is all the more disappointing because the seeds of such a discussion are present in this book. Those often demonized by the conspiracy-minded, he notes, have been the Jews, along with "Freemasons, Britons, and Americans," all of whom "share two outstanding characteristics: modernity and idealism." This recalls the sinister CIA agent in Robert Stone's *A Flag For Sunrise* who composes a single sentence at his typewriter: "The Jew is at home in the modern world." He elaborates: "We're at the primitive stage of mankind, that's what people

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don't understand. . . .Strip away the slogans and excuses and verbiage, the so-called ideology, and you're reading about what one pack of chimpanzees did to the other."

The conspiracist vision bears traces of nostalgia, even archaism. It mourns the irretrievable loss of the heroic, that last vestige of pre-democratic culture. Pipes is right to detect a remarkable consistency in the way these theories are conceived and elaborated, and to note their immunity to evolution or development. Conspiracism, in the end, is infantilism, It is every child's angry demand that the world be rid of all those who make it more complicated.

SAM TANENHAUS

Wunderkind in Winter

MAN WITHOUT A FACE: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF COMMUNISM'S GREATEST SPYMASTER. By Markus Wolf, with Anne McElvoy. Times Books. $25.00

For something like thirty-four years, the author of this memoir served as chief of the East German Foreign Intelligence Service, one of the most feared and forceful institutions in the infrastructure of postwar European communism. Herr Markus Wolf began his career as a Stalinist *wunderkind*; he was a youth of twenty-eight when first elevated to his tremendous position. The year was 1952; the Eastern European purges had crested; and Wolf's appointment, plainly Soviet-inspired, was designed to tighten Stalin's grip. But young Markus had been born to power. His father, Friedrich Wolf, was a German playwright and propagandist dear to the *nomenklatura*, and Markus was raised in the Moscow of the Terror, a coddled child, Russophile, bilingual, and groomed for the kind of authority that was handed to him in Germany after the war. There he survived decade upon decade as one of communism's most enduring grandees.

For most of that time, Wolf did his work in covert omnipotence, mythologized but unseen. With the collapse of the lie that was his life, however, he has unwillingly emerged into visibility, and now plays a new role in a new Europe. Since he was once the keeper of secrets, he is viewed as a man with history's answers. This has turned him into a kind of celebrity of cynicism. He regularly appears on the tonier European talk shows, where with lordly contempt he delivers the last word on the nations and people he once did so much to ruin. The old spy has become a star.

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It is perhaps a paradox that this secretive bureaucrat should be so obviously endowed with star quality. But star quality it is. Both in his person and his prose, the most lustrous feature of the man's style is pride—always a useful trait in an apologist. His now-familiar face is lined with the weary arrogance of one who has spent a lifetime being the brightest, most forceful, and (until 1989) usually most powerful person in any given room. He is a man of evident and insolent intelligence, transparently arrogant, cultivated, and calculating. He is radiant with an immunity to shame and a cool disdain for the petty provincialism of mere truth. Curiously, a lifetime of deception helps make him believed. Above all, Wolf generates awe; he looks positively sated with self-confidence, which has not, it seems, been shaken even a little by the universal discredit that now covers his lifework and the dismal castle of criminality and lies within which he once secretly ruled.

For rule he did, and now that he rules no more, Wolf's chosen mission is to defend and rationalize communism—*his* communism—against its discredit. The task is of course impossible, but Wolf clambers around the impossible with such suppleness that it looks easy. Double talk helps. That, and an essentially mendacious tone. If the smooth stuff here is to be believed, this lifelong enemy of democracy—sworn, serious, and murderously effective—has always been a matchless friend of liberalism, a crusader for good government, Stalinist-style. Wolf avoids predictable pitfalls; he understands the futility of mere denial, mere loyalty to the old lies. He easily—too easily—admits all kind of evils and errors. Indeed, almost every senior figure in the history of the GDR is seen as a knave or fool. Pig-headed brutes, the pack of them, all except for—well, guess.

Wolf's prose is readable; he has interesting and probably even truthful things to say on subjects ranging from the Otto John case to the motives of gigolos, from the construction of the Wall to the mind of his hero and patron in police statesmanship, Yuri Andropov. That liberal. Yet, claiming to tell all, Wolf has surprisingly little to say that is new about the Cold War, or even communism. Despite the grand tone, this is little more than a pack of smooth evasions and contradictions, anecdotally dressed up. Wolf *sounds* like he is telling us truths. He is avoiding them. Rather than fill a page with these evasions, let me focus on one above all: criminality.

Criminality has of course been a highly publicized issue in Wolf's post-Wall saga, and he writes at length about his successful defense against the German government's prosecution of him for some of what it contends are his many crimes. Though the Germans have managed to convict Egon Krenz and some fifty-five other GDR officials for various offenses, Wolf has successfully maintained that he cannot be tried by one government for actions he performed, legitimately, as a citizen of another

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government, even if that government no longer exists. I cannot comment on the legal merits of this defense, except to note that it sidesteps the intellectually crucial issue of the criminality of the regime, and the cause, Wolf served.

Victor's justice, Wolf sniffs. Perhaps. Yet things are about to change. Our entire discussion of communism is about to enter a new phase—a new historiography, a new history—which is unlikely to deal gently with arguments such as Wolf's *apologia*. This coming wave may well transform our entire discussion of revolution and radicalism over the next few years. It will be international, though its prime energy now is coming from France. Consider the late Francois Furet's overwhelming *Le Passé d'une Illusion*; consider too the massive, relentless, irresistible indictment entitled *Le Livre Noir du Communisme*, recently produced by a circle of scholars around the historian Stephane Courtois. These two works, both astonishing best-sellers, are having an impact in post-communist Europe not unlike the impact *The Gulag Archipelago* had on the age of dissidence. But Furet and Courtois are Westerners; they have dashed aside the old double standard that let anti-anti-communists feign sympathy for Russian or Eastern European dissidents while assailing any Westerner, worst of all any *American,* who dared say similar things. This new history is a new post-communist assessment of communism's social bankruptcy, its crushing force for impoverishment, its totalitarian bond to fascism, its long history of murder and terror. It opens a new phase in the Western critique of totalitarianism. And it reduces the old-style double-talk of a Markus Wolf to babble.

By his own account, Wolf and his agency helped Stalinize Eastern Europe, suppress the Hungarian Revolution, defend and maintain the Berlin Wall, and subvert democratic politics across Europe, Africa, and Latin America while penetrating with agents of espionage every liberal democratic state in the West. His agency organized political murders, and brought the cruelties of black propaganda to new levels of sadistic effectiveness, including sexual sadism. Wolf was for years unfailingly helpful to his hero Andropov in his campaign to disgrace and discredit every dissident from Solzhenitzin to Wolf Biermann to Natan Scharansky. Much in the Soviet-sponsored "wars of national liberation"—remember?—and the wreckage they left strewn across what used to be called the Third World was inspired, guided, and often outright directed by the East Germans. So was support and guidance for much in post-1968 international terror, ranging from the PLO to the Baader-Meinhof group, to such free-lance celebrities of murder as "Carlos the Jackal." (*Such* a tiresome fellow, Wolf sighs.) Then there was nuclear espionage, and the Stalinizing of the Cuban revolution. Wolf's agency played a key, if ancillary, role in the Orwellian

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domestic spying through which the GDR transformed the role of citizen into that of informer and made espionage the totalitarian principle governing every human exchange: all love, all loyalty, all rivalry, all hope, all fear—a nation based in mass mutual betrayal.

All this, Wolf assures us, sophisticates like ourselves should brush aside. Some of these *démarches* were mistakes; but what government doesn't make mistakes? As for the others, it is essential to Wolf's defense that they served the legitimate aspirations of a legitimate state. Were some illegal? Come, come. Every secret service sponsors illegality. You think the CIA and British intelligence are Sunday schools?

Note how important secret services are to this defense. Reduced to its crude essence, it holds that since every secret service sponsors illegality, any state with a secret service stands outside judgements of legitimacy or criminality. If everyone does it, everyone is the same. It is a curious revival of the old doctrine of "equivalence"—that favorite nostrum of post-1968 radicals, the blunt instrument once used to batter down the liberal critique of totalitarianism. The United States and the USSR, so equivalence proclaimed, are equally bad; twin powers, indistinguishable in evil. "The Soviet Union," one heard, "is *almost* as bad as the United States." Nonsense? Wolf's book is a smooth new version. It is reminiscent of when Carlos the Jackal, paunchy and middle-aged, stood in a Parisian courtroom being tried for three of many French murders attributed to him, and hectored his judges as "Stalinist." There is "equivalence" at its most pure. For Wolf, twin secret services mean twin legitimacy and twin illegitimacy. In a world where nobody is right, let nobody dare judge Markus Wolf.

Such is the logic that the new history, with its new perspective on state criminality, will demolish. Not that the perspective is unfamiliar. The Nazis long since made a vision of the criminal state a haunted commonplace. But should the communist states be seen in that light? Clearly, neither the law nor secret services make criminal states. Tyranny makes criminal states. Crimes against humanity make them. Courtois's scholars estimate Marxism-Leninism's murdered victims, worldwide, at something around *one hundred million*. If this number is even close to correct, where does talk of justice even begin? That is one, two. . .many Markus Wolfs. A dark new discussion is taking shape. After such knowledge, what forgiveness?

STEPHEN KOCH

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Debunking the Debunkers

FABRICATING ISRAELI HISTORY: THE "NEW HISTORIANS." By Efraim Karsh. Frank Cass and Co. $17.50

In *What Is History?* the famous English historian E. H. Carr said that "the facts of history never come to us 'pure,' since they do not and cannot exist in a pure form: they are always refracted through the mind of the recorder. It follows that when we take up a work of history, our first concern should be not with the facts that it contains but with the historian who wrote it." Carr was right to point out that the ideal of "objective history," or historical truth, can never really be attained because the historian's product will always reflect his or her biases. Still, some historians come much closer to the ideal than others. The best historians collect all of the available facts and then make reasonable judgments about the past on the basis of these facts. Less scrupulous historians, on the other hand, neither collect all of the available facts nor make reasonable judgments. Rather, they generally emphasize carefully selected subsets of the available facts and interpret them in ways that serve their ideological agendas. Carr's advice to know the historian applies with special cogency to these "political" historians.

Israel's "New Historians," who emerged in the middle of the 1980s amidst a tremendous amount of self-congratulatory fanfare, are quintessential political historians. Their mission, as they candidly admit, is to debunk the "myths" of what they call "official Zionist history," as well as to unmask the alleged academic propagandists who have produced this history over the last five decades, all in order to help pave the way for a "just" (read: pro-Arab) solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. To justify major Israeli concessions, primarily to the Palestinian Arabs, they have rewritten the history surrounding the birth of the Jewish state, asserting that putatively untapped sources of information—mainly official documents—prove that Israel is largely, if not solely, responsible for causing and perpetuating the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In placing the blame squarely on the Jewish state, the New Historians have not broken any new ground. Envenomed critics of Zionism and Israel—men like Edward Said and Noam Chomsky—have routinely hurled the same charges over the years. But because the scribblings of the Saids and Chomskys of this world have been so mendacious—and because their desire to see the Jewish state destroyed has been so obvious—their views on the Arab-Israeli conflict have not become very fashionable among serious scholars. Indeed, only like-minded anti-Zionist extremists

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have given their views much credence. The writings of the New Historians, to the contrary, have attracted considerable attention from serious scholars, because they appear to conform to the requirements of genuine scholarship and, perhaps, because their political purpose is not nearly as blatant and sinister.

In this easy-to-read and thoroughly convincing volume of historical detective work, Efraim Karsh strips away the academic cloak in which the New Historians have wrapped themselves. He demonstrates not only that they have reached baseless (even ludicrous) conclusions, but also that their historiography is downright dishonest. Karsh, a noted Middle East expert and editor of the professional journal *Israel Affairs*, specifically takes to task the two most prominent New Historians: Benny Morris, who has researched the origins of the Palestinian Arab refugee problem, and Avi Shlaim, who has looked into Zionist-Transjordanian-British relations in the 1947-49 period. By painstakingly sifting and evaluating the evidence that Morris and Shlaim used to make their respective cases—and by citing additional evidence that they either overlooked or ignored—Karsh shows that, far from being undermined by their "discoveries," the traditional, non-revisionist version of Israeli history is essentially complete and accurate.

Morris's most sensational charge is that, throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the Zionist leadership in general, and David Ben-Gurion in particular, zealously entertained the idea of "transfer"—that is, the idea that at least a part of the Palestinian Arab population should be resettled outside of Palestine, by force if necessary, to make room for a Jewish state. But this conclusion, Karsh explains, rests entirely on the unethical use of evidence, such as deliberate (and clever) editing of documents to get them to say more or less the opposite of what they really say. When the original documents are examined in their proper historical context, he shows, it immediately becomes apparent that neither the Zionist leadership nor David Ben-Gurion ever took the transfer idea to heart. Rather, they considered it only briefly, during the debate over the 1937 Peel Partition Plan—a plan that envisaged the creation of separate Jewish and Arab states in Palestine—as possible compensation for the Zionist movement's agreement to surrender its claims to most of Palestine's territory. Moreover, the documents reveal that, for the Zionist leadership to approve of a population transfer, very specific conditions first had to be met: the surrounding Arab states and the Palestinian Arabs had to consent to the transfer; the Zionist movement had to have no hand in actually carrying out the transfer; and the British had to take full responsibility for resettling the uprooted Palestinian Arabs. In the event, the Peel Partition Plan died a quick death, and so did the transfer idea in the mind of the Zionist leadership.

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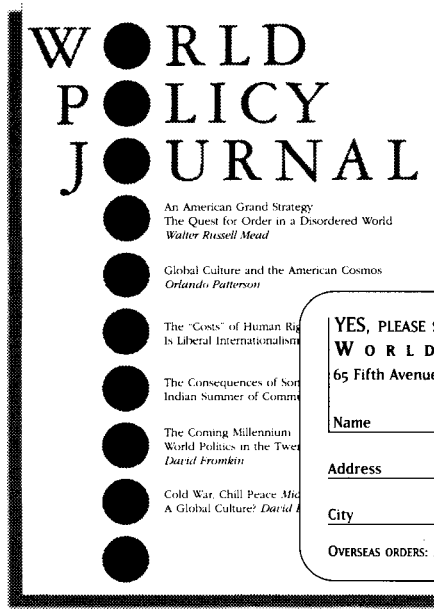

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Nevertheless, these unpleasant facts have not stopped Morris from implying that the Zionist movement harbored bad intentions toward the Palestinian Arabs right through the 1948-49 War of Independence, even though he himself openly acknowledges that the refugee problem was not born of any Zionist master plan to displace the Palestinian Arabs, but rather evolved out of a complex set of causes that had much to do with the deep divisions within Palestinian Arab society and its total unreadiness to withstand the test of war.

Like Morris, Shlaim suggests that the Zionist leadership had malign intentions toward the Palestinian Arabs. For him, its great sin resides in its "collusion" with King Abdullah of Transjordan to subvert the 1947 United Nations Partition Resolution, which (like the earlier Peel Partition Plan) would have divided Palestine into distinct Jewish and Arab states had it been implemented. According to Shlaim, this Zionist-Tranjordanian conspiracy to cheat the Palestinian Arabs out of a state by dividing its territory between them—a conspiracy, he further contends, that had tacit British approval—was sealed at a late 1947 meeting between Golda Meir and King Abdullah. Karsh, to put it mildly, tears to shreds Shlaim's conspiracy theory. He notes that Shlaim has wildly misinterpreted accounts of the Meir-Abdullah meeting, deliberately ignored a mound of evidence that points away from the existence of a conspiracy, and utterly misunderstood the process by which bilateral agreements are negotiated and ratified. Indeed, far from committing itself to a Zionist-Transjordanian plot, the Zionist leadership loudly and consistently supported the partition resolution in its contacts with King Abdullah's regime. Furthermore, by perusing British government documents, Karsh shows that British leaders like Ernest Bevin and Clement Attlee—men who detested Jews *qua* Jews and whose imperialist instincts caused them to endorse anti-Zionist policies—would not have allowed themselves to become a part of any conspiracy that could have benefitted the Zionist cause.

Not only has Karsh shattered the myths created by the New Historians by ripping apart their historiography, but he has also produced a very important contribution to the literature on the Arab-Israeli conflict. For in the process of debunking the debunkers, he has powerfully supported the traditional interpretation of the conflict's origins. Among the traditionalist findings that Karsh confirms: the 1947 United Nations Partition Resolution was stillborn because of Arab (particularly Palestinian) rejection, not because of Zionist machinations; the Palestinian Arab refugee problem flowed from many causes, especially the dishonorable behavior of the Palestinian Arab leadership; and the British government did not quietly support Zionist aspirations. Quite the reverse, it did what it could to abort

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the birth of the Jewish state; once this course of action failed, it tried to shrink the new state to microscopic proportions.

But the ultimate question remains: Will the New Historians' distortions win the day? Will their interpretation of history, in other words, eventually displace the traditional interpretation? Although Karsh does not dwell on this question, he appears to be worried by this prospect. While he is certainly right to be concerned, the long-term fate of the New Historians may not be all that bright. After all, most contemporary Israeli historians who have researched the same topics do not endorse their views. Besides, the New Historians may well have planted the seeds of their own destruction by launching *ad hominem* attacks on these historians. The New Historians, in fact, have regularly accused many of their peers of being part of some sort of bizarre academic plot to whitewash Zionist and Israeli history, and they have grossly misrepresented the methods and conclusions of their peers to sustain this ridiculous charge. Intellectual counterattacks like Karsh's are the inevitable response to this sort of unseemly behavior. Indeed, he is not the first scholar to challenge the New Historians. A number of other historians—including Itamar Rabinovich, Avraham Sela, Shabtai Teveth, and Shlomo Slonim—have already contested the methods and conclusions of this school. More critiques will undoubtedly follow. Only time will tell, of course, whether the New Historians—like an exploding star that eventually dims and fades out of sight under the forces of nature—succumb to the assaults of their critics. If they do disappear from the scene, Karsh's book will surely have played a significant role in their demise. Whatever the future holds for the New Historians, though, nobody interested in their views can afford to bypass Karsh's insightful work.

DAVID RODMAN

Three Kinds of History

KYRIE. By Ellen Bryant Voigt. W. W. Norton $17.95
THE POST OFFICE MURALS RESTORED. By Robert B. Shaw. Copper Beech Press. $11.00
SELVA MORALE. By John Peck. Carcanet Press. $9.95

These three books share a broad concern with the matter of history. But each author understands it differently. For the various speakers in Voigt's *Kyrie*, the issue is to preserve the daily, concrete ties of love and duty among

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ordinary people when they are put under the pressure of a catastrophe. For the speakers and the poetic personae of *The Post Office Murals Restored,* the issue is to come to a sober judgment of the promise and problem of American history while resisting the temptation to self-righteous rage. For John Peck, the issue is to arrive at a comprehension not only of the events but of the meaning of history in its broadest sense, not only of particular atrocities, but also of the rise and fall of empires and of the replacement of a mythological understanding of the world by a political one.

The sonnets of *Kyrie* concern the great influenza pandemic of 1918-1919, in which twenty-five million people died worldwide, half a million of them in the United States. The flu pandemic has not cut a large figure in American literature, although it was the greatest single epidemiological disaster in human history, dwarfing in sheer numbers killed (although not in the percentages) even the Black Death of 1346. In the candor and courage with which her characters face the mass death around them, Voigt does homage to the decency and humanity of a culture now irretrievably in the past.

Kyrie's settings are for the most part provincial, in a hilly, rural community which seems to be in southwest Virginia. The focal intelligence is a young schoolteacher named Mattie. We are introduced to her fiancé Price, who, after impulsively enlisting in the Army, is mutilated by a shell in France, and dies just after the Armistice, of influenza. We also meet Mattie's students and family, her cousins, Price's soldier friend Pug, who dies on shipboard, the overwhelmed local doctors and ministers, and many others. The setting and the characters bring Masters to mind, but the air of the volume is more like Hardy than Masters, for Voigt always sees her characters with an eye that has looked first upon mortality, that sees the wise and the foolish alike as wrestling with problems that bring out the humanity of even the weakest characters.

Voigt knows that mourning both ends and doesn't end. Is it a cruel fact or a kind one that life goes on? Does it mean that life is stronger than death, or merely indifferent to the dead? In the prologue to the volume, Voigt describes, with measured sadness, how the succession of plants from scrub to birch to maple, obliterates the traces of abandoned farms. After Price's death, life closes behind the event like water behind a boat. But not quite:

> Time
> isn't a straight line, it's a scummy pond
> our minds fish in, and I might hook
> Price alive instead of me
> but not the two of us, the dream we'd had—
> that's been crowded out by the actual,

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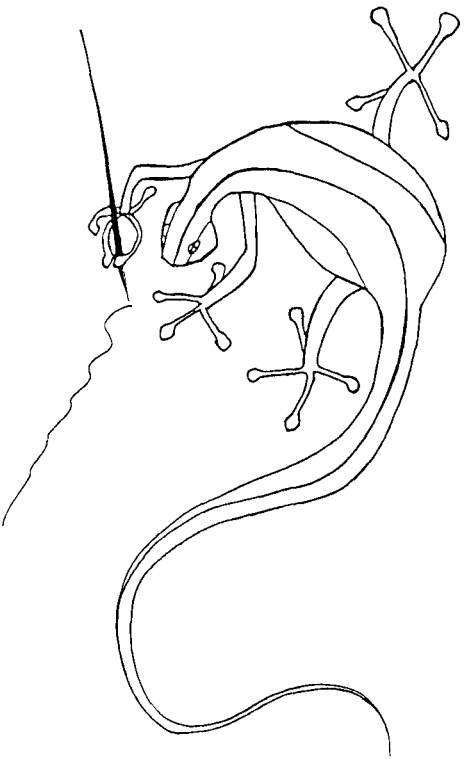

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my husband, those borrowed children. After lunch
it's Once Upon a Time—my gift to them—
always the same few stories, can't change a word,
it eases them to know how they will end.

Robert B. Shaw brings to *The Post Office Murals Restored* all of the wit, the keen and sensitive judgment, and the delicate ability to render, even in verse of scrupulous formality, the quality of thoughtful and self-critical musing-aloud that characterized his admirable earlier volume *The Wonder of Seeing Double.* Many of the other virtues of that book are evident here: the meticulous sensitivity to details ("Again, Cicadas") and the ability to take the cruxes and passages, and the passing pleasures, of ordinary middle-class life with mature poetic reflectiveness, ("Fanlight"). Shaw has learned from Renaissance poetry the development of extended conceits, charged them with sad humor, as in the little speech by a bookmark who, when you lose your place, your footing among your ideas, "is engaged / to lie at length among them, interleaved / until you'd have them paged." His turns of phrase are so sharp that their asperity stings as when, the poet having found a long sought-volume just as the library is closing, the book dissolves into a little heap of brittle paper-chaff, leaving intact only the author's errata:

For "inessential parts" read "in essential parts."
For "god" read "goad."
For "construction" read "constriction."
For "near" read "fear."
For "father" read "farther."

The protagonist of the long, ambitious, title poem is cleaning and restoring a WPA mural in a provincial New England post-office. The narrator is attractively unpretentious; although the mural is not the kind of thing he would paint he does not jeer at it, and indeed tries to think how it might be worthy of more than grudging respect. Clearly the whole task is a metaphor for the poet's own attempt to assess the virtues and failings of his country and his people; their wrongs and errors matter only if their promise matters, and for this reason the protagonist restrains himself from singing private arias of guilt and extenuation.

The unease about expertise and self-discipline in this volume is never more touching than in "A Piece of Rope," in which a little boy attempts to come to terms with his parents' crumbling marriage by committing to

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memory all the knots in the *Boy Scout Handbook*. Waking in fear one night, he counts over the list of knots he knows:

> His fingers were all twisted in the sheet
> and he could hear his own voice in the dark
> far away, saying over the names of knots:
> throat seizing, timber hitch, lark's head, cat's paw.
> And all the rest, and none of them of much
> use in the darkness he was camped in now.

John Peck's *Selva Morale* is the most ambitious in scope and the most intellectually challenging of these books. Two adjacent poems capture the dominant notes. In "To an Unknown Poet" a young Roman of the time of Septimus Severus, who claimed to be the adopted son of Marcus Aurelius, watches Nubian captives dance for the Emperor at Lupercal:

> Watching firelight leapers
> at Lupercal, studying the limbs
> of Africans, a boy
> felt the thud and whinny of his calling
> when he saw that the arm's melody
> phrased pain, and that the planting
> and uprooting of the foot, too, grew pain.
> Prattle of embassies
> and decay downward
> were evidence for others,
> his sense of it felt simpler: language had gone out with
> ox teams, keels,
> chisels across the lintels of grafted gods,
> while something less had come back.
> Mortared a world while the lime in it drifted sand
> and the sand whispered of foreshores, of time,
> not quite in one moment, or from one place.
> All this on a glistening
> Nubian twisting for Severus
> under the Fool's weaving chant.

Watching the dancers, the young poet suddenly understands that the dance has syntax and meaning, and this insight into the pain the dancers

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articulate is the first sign to him that he will himself be a poet. The key is not the boy's discovery that the dance expresses pain, but that the pain is shaped, that it has nuances and syntax, that the "arm's melody / phrased pain." The boy discovers the intelligence about feeling which is not just the intelligent exploration into feeling, but the unknown intelligence that feeling itself, in and through articulation, struggles to embody and behold.

The boy's discovery about articulation says something about why Peck's own art is so dense and unyielding. He aims allusively at something that is beyond intelligence, something incapable of exact definition but capable of being "phrased," of manifesting itself upon the intelligence that it subdues but by which it is never subdued. The difficulty also derives from the fact that we who seek this truth do so from a position of inescapable bad faith: the poem cannot enter the minds of the dancers, only the mind of the young Roman poet, who can sense but not fully enter into the secrets of the oppression in which he is complicit.

If "To an Unknown Poet" claims that poetic knowledge is knowledge of moral pollution, the untitled poem that precedes it argues that a stern and vital poetic consciousness might yet remake the central experiences of meaning under the pressure of that meaning's loss.

Sing and sing me again
sang law silently to the cantor:
hand's eye and ear's heart thereby
smoothing the mind's clamor,

and when mind vaulted forth
in body, windowed on primal fire,
stone groining stone grew leafage
to bear blood's root through air

and revolve animal
variety through the full spectrum,
haunch, tusk and cock brightening
where the beyond stained them

carnelian, sapphire,
rose shadowing caverned amethyst,
viridian source pulsing
into arc-welded west.

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The speaker describes the Torah as singing an Orphic song, making men of beasts. The law itself is silent, but from its silence the cantor smooths the mind's clamor. This orphic song is also the song of the body, of the hand's eye and ear's heart. And indeed it is the mind, not the body, whose clamor the song smooths, perhaps by finding out what it is to be a spirit and embodied, to be subject to causality and time and yet to have will and duty.

These two poems, "To an Unknown Poet" and "Sing and Sing me Again," represent the opposite possibilities Peck imagines for poetry and for the world. Art cannot itself secure the rebirth of the world. But the tenacity of the will to make art testifies that the world has not been wholly given over to death. In "For Radovan Lorkovic" Peck implores a master teacher carrying his truckload of violins back to war-torn Croatia, leading the Muses through danger: "past roars of mortars / carry his light load of attunement, take it / to those bare rooms, lead memory's daughters." The intensity of art and those who give themselves fully to its intensity speak to a broken world what it won't hear but can't fully ignore either. What finally matters most in *Selva Morale* are those moments when one emerges out of the moral woods for a moment of pure and mute and largely-baffled beholding. The languages do not hold it, and the poetry of poetry is an immortal embodiment that must soon go; poetry cannot make it stand still, cannot measure it; but it can tell you where the poet stood when it blew by.

JOHN BURT

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INDEX TO VOLUME LXV

AUSONIUS, Decimus Magnus: Attius Patera [Pater], Rhetorician (poem) (tr. by David R. Slavitt), II, 255
AVISHAI, Bernard: Education for a New Economy: What Businesses Can Do (Education and Integration Conference, Session 3), III, 454
BARBER, Jennifer: In the Bosch Room, Downstairs at the Prado (poem), II, 257
BAUDELAIRE, Charles: Burial (poem), The Lone Man's Wine (poem) (tr. by Norman Shapiro), I, 86
BELL, Millicent: Fiction Chronicle, I, 49; Fiction Chronicle, II, 259; Fiction Chronicle, IV, 635
BELLOW, Saul: Ralph Ellison in Tivoli, IV, 524
BJELOGRLIC, Alex Belly: Kafka's Poor Chirihau, IV, 536
BRUSTEIN, Robert: Education in the Arts (Education and Integration Conference, Session 3), III, 446
BURT, John: Kyrie by Ellen Bryant Voigt, The Post Office Murals Restored by Robert B. Shaw, Selva Morale by John Peck (br), IV, 673
CORINNA: Memorial Day (story) (tr. by Michal Sapir), IV, 580
DAVISON, Peter: Seaside Summer Quarry (poem), II, 249
DAVVETAS, Nikos: Dream (poem) (tr. Peter Constantine), IV, 613
DE JAUREGUI, Heidi Urbahn: The Art of Getting By (tr. by Ian Johnson), I, 93; The Freedom of a Poetic Mind (tr. by Jim Tucker), IV, 615
DE LACERDA, Alberto: Untitled (poem) (tr. by author and Christopher Middleton), I, 78
DEPPE-WOLFINGER, Helga: The German Case: Assuring High Standards in Mass Education (Education and Integration Conference, Session 3), III, 435
DI PIERO, W. S.: Some Voice (poem), II, 248
DONOGHUE, Denis: The Collected Writings of T. E. Hulme by Karen Csengeri (br), IV, 648
DUNN, Susan: Conflict or Consensus?, II, 195
ELSHTAIN, Jean Bethke: In Defense of the Government by Jacob Weisberg (br), II, 320
FERRAROTTI, Franco: Letter From Italy, III, 349
FINN, Chester, Jr.: The Intersection of K-12 and College Education (Education and Integration Conference, Session 1), III, 378
FLEISCHMANN, Cyrille: Fame and Fortune (story) (tr. by Avriel Goldberger), II, 235; Jazz (story) (tr. by Avriel Goldberger), II, 240
FOGDALL, Kristin: Aristotle's Lantern (poem), II, 252
GLAZER, Nathan: Historical Cultures versus Multi-cultures, (Education and Integration Conference, Session 4), III, 488
GOODHEART, Eugene: Thomas Mann's Comic Spirit, II, 283; American Pastoral by Philip Roth (br), II, 306
GREGER, Debora: The Laurel Tree by the River (poem), IV, 610
HAACK, Susan: The Best Man for the Job May be a Woman, II, 214

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HADAS, Rachel: The Peacock in the Garden (poem), II, 256
HARTMAN, Geoffrey: Shoah and Intellectual Witness, I, 37
HERF, Jeffrey: Germany Unified and Europe Transformed by Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice (br), I, 157
HOLLANDER, Paul: At a Century's Ending by George F. Kennan (br), II, 310
HONEGGER, Gitta: Hitler's Wien by Brigitte Hamann (br), I, 149
JORDAN, Barbara: Urban Setting (poem), I, 78
KAMOV, Janko Polić: Freedom (story) (tr. by Ljiljana Sćurić), I, 107
KANE, Paul: Dark Songs: Slave House and Synagogue by Laurence Lieberman, The Fuehrer Bunker by W. D. Snodgrass, Work Without Hope by John Burt (br), I, 168
KAPLAN, H. J.: Albert Camus by Olivier Todd (br), II, 301
KIRCHWEY, Karl: Juno's Song (poem), I, 76
KOCH, Stephen: Man Without a Face by Markus Wolf (br), IV, 664
KONRÁD, George: Aphorisms on the Durability of Jews, IV, 544
KRAMER, Rita: Teacher Education: Can It be Turned Around (Education and Integration Conference, Session 1), III, 370
KRIEGEL, Leonard: Fathers, Sons, Brothers, Strangers: A Meditation on Courage, Memory, and Belonging, I, 61
KURZWEIL, Edith: Untitled (Comment), I, 10; Film á la Mode, I, 88; Nazi Germany and the Jews by Saul Friedlander, Shtetl by Eva Hoffmann (br), I, 139; One Hundred Years of Seductions, II, 187; Introduction (Education and Integration Conference, Session 1), III, 354; Postscript (Education and Integration Conference), III, 503; Terrorism (Comment), IV, 522
LAUGHLIN, James: The Life of Words (poem), The First Night (poem), A Moment of Vanity (poem), The Magic Flute (poem), II, 258
LESSING, Doris: An Evening Discussion, I, 11
MANEA, Norman: The Fifth Impossibility, IV, 529; The Jewish Writer in the Public Arena, IV, 532
MARCUS, Steven: The Humanities at the End of Centuries: From the Classics to Cultural Studies (Education and Integration Conference, Session 2), III, 407
MARTIN, Jerry: All Worth Preserving (Education and Integration Conference, Session 2), III, 416
MAXWELL, Glyn: Dawn on the Midi (poem), IV, 602
MCCLATCHY, J. D.: Majestic Indolence: English Romantic Poetry and the Work of Art by Willard Spiegelman, The Title to the Poem by Anne Ferry (br), II, 326
MCHUGH, Heather: Deposition (poem), I, 79
MCMAHON, Lynne: House (poem), IV, 606

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MENASHE, Samuel: In the Ring (poem), "Can these bones live?" (poem), II, 247
MEYERS, Michael: What Can We Do Concretely to Achieve Equality? (Education and Integration Conference, Session 4), III, 481
MIDDLETON, Christopher: Aladağ Mountain Sketches (poem), II, 250
MILLER, Carol E.: Herd (poem), IV, 612
MILOSZ, Czeslaw: A Ball (poem) (tr. by author and Robert Hass), IV, 600
MOLDAW, Carol: After a Long Journey (poem), IV, 606
MONTALE, Eugenio: Arsenio (poem) (tr. by Millicent Bell), IV, 603
PAOLA, Suzanne: Prayer to Seal Up the Wombdoor (poem), IV, 600
PHILLIPS, William: Untitled (Comment), I, 9; Sources of the Left (Comment), II, 185; Roger Stevens (Comment), II, 186; Ruminations (Comment), IV, 521
PINSKER, Sanford: Radical Son by David Horowitz, II, 323 (br); Redeeming Laughter by Peter L. Berger (br), IV, 652
PLATONOV, Andrey: Chevengur (story) (tr. by Robert and Elizabeth Chandler), IV, 567; The Seventh Man (story) (tr. by Robert and Elizabeth Chandler and Angela Livingstone), IV, 571
PRYCE-JONES, David: Whittaker Chambers by Sam Tanenhaus (br), I, 162; How Is England Educating Its Immigrants? (Education and Integration Conference, Session 4) III, 473
RAVIKOVITCH, Dahlia: Grand Days Have Gone by Her (poem) (tr. by Tsipi Keller), II, 246
REHAK, Melanie: Apostasy (poem), I, 75
REVELL, Donald: ARCADY: Conforming to the fashions. . . (poem), ARCADY: Meant never to die. . . (poem), I, 83
RODMAN, David: Fabricating Israeli History by Efraim Karsh (br), IV, 669
ROGOFF, Jay: The Vessel (poem), II, 254
ROSEN, Norma: Fugitive Pieces by Anne Michaels (br), II, 313
RUDMAN, Mark: Modern Disaster (poem), IV, 607
SANDY, Stephen: Exotica (poem), Daphnis and Chloe (poem), I, 81
SASS, Louis A.: Surface and Depth: Wittgenstein's Reflections on Psychoanalysis, IV, 590
SCHOLZ, Kurt: The Austrian Experience (Education and Integration Conference, Session 1), III, 365
SHAW, Robert B.: In Passing (poem), IV, 613
SIMECKA, Martin: The Importance of Reading Maps, III, 344
SONNEVI, Göran: From "Disparates" (poems) (tr. Rika Lesser), IV, 605
SPIRES, Elizabeth: The Frame (poem), I, 86

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STROUT, Cushing: American Sphinx by Joseph J. Ellis (br), II, 317
SZYMBORSKA, Wislawa: A Contribution to Statistics (poem) (tr. by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh), II, 244
TANENHAUS, Sam: Conspiracy by Daniel Pipes (br), IV, 658
TAYLOR, Emily: A (poem), I, 84
THOMPSON, John: Benediction (story), II, 221
TIŠMA, Aleksandar: From The Book of Blam (excerpt), IV, 558
TOMLINSON, Charles: Watching Water (poem), Another Summer (poem), I, 80
VAN ZANTEN, Agnès: French Debates on Immigrants and Schooling (Education and Integration Conference, Session 4), III, 468
WALDROP, Keith: The Ghost of a Hunter (poem), IV, 609
WEBB, Igor: Yvor Winters as Teacher, II, 273; One Key to School Reform is Reform of Universities (Education and Integration Conference, Session 1) III, 359
WESTLING, Jon: Introduction (Education and Integration Conference, Session I), III, 354; Ars Rhetorica in the University of the Twenty-first Century (Education and Integration Conference, Session 3), III, 439
WILKIN, Karen: At the Galleries, I, 124; Manet's Modernism, II, 294; A Critic and His Critics, IV, 627
WISTRICH, Robert: Understanding Hannah Arendt, I, 30
WOOD, Peter: The Dilemma of College Admissions (Education and Integration Conference, Session 2), III, 420
WOODWARD, C. Vann: What's Happened to History (Education and Integration Conference, Session 2), III, 402
WRIGHT, Charles: American Twilight (poem), IV, 614
YOUNG, C. Dale: The Endless Cumulus (poem), II, 253
ZAGAJEWSKI, Adam: The Greenhouse (poem), Letter from a Reader (poem), Long Afternoons (poem) (tr. by Clare Cavanagh), I, 73

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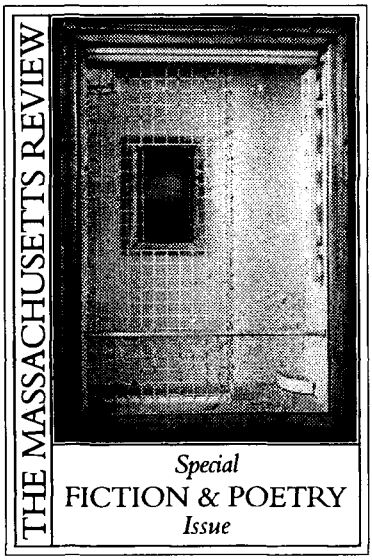

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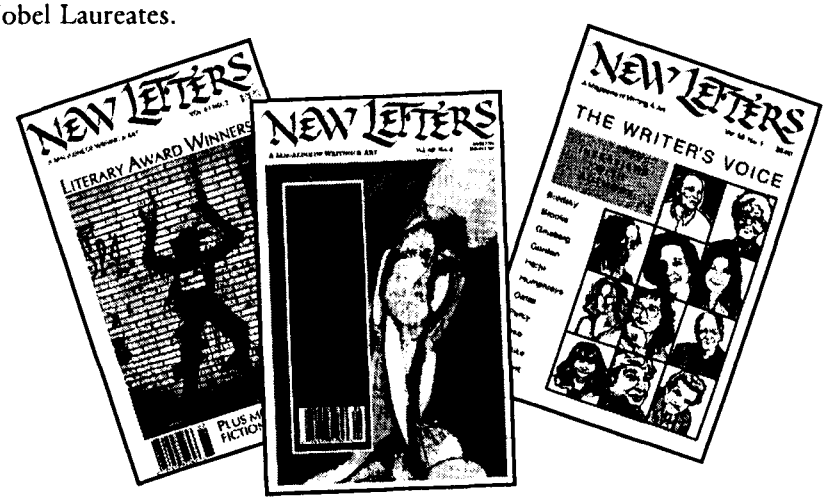

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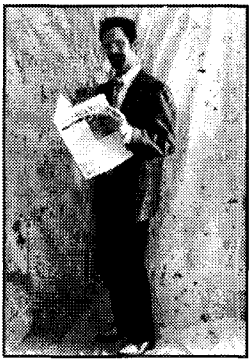
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